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FROM A BOOK FUND COMMEMORATING
RUTH GERALDINE ASHEN
CLASS OF 1931

It's a sad thing
when a man is to be so soon forgotten
And the shining in his soul
gone from the earth
With no thing remaining;

And it's a sad thing
when a man shall die
And forget love
which is the shiningness of life;

But it's a sadder thing
that a man shall forget love
And he not dead but walking in the field
of a May morning
And listening to the voice of the thrush.

—R.G.A., in *A Yearbook of Stanford Writing*, 1931

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MOSES.

MOSES.

An Essay

ON THE DELIVERANCE AND JOURNEYINGS OF ISRAEL.

BY

CAPTAIN N. X. GWYNNE,

H.M. 77th, late 20th, Regiment.

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MOSES.

BOOK I.

INTRODUCTION. — HOREB. — MOSES AND AARON. — ELDERS. — MIDNIGHT ASSEMBLY. — AARON'S ADDRESS. — SIGNS. — ÆGYPTIAN COURT. — PHARAOH. — REJECTION. — MAGI.

GREAT Power unsearchable! Eternal Spirit!
Sole source of Truth! from whom all wisdom flows,
Uphold, instruct me venturesome to sing
The life of Moses. He whom Thou didst choose,
E'en from his birth, to free the fettered slave,
And, as Redeemer of Thy mystic word,
To lead Thine Israël to Canaan's land;
Of him, the only child of woman born,
With whom Thou hast as face to face communed
Of him who, bid by Thee, went up to die
On Pisgah's mount; and there, unseen by Man,
Unstirred by mourner's cry, was laid asleep,
All soothed by Thee alone, in death's embrace.

Nigh fourscore years had run their saddened course,
Since first a babe, by fair Thuoris seen
Asleep in fragile bark, exposed to Death,
Moved pity by its tears, and was received
A gift from Heaven, and nourished as her child.
That babe, to manhood grown, had sate a chief
In Ægypt's lore, a Prince in Ægypt's state.
Then had resigned the proffered crown, and left
His pomp, his power, and dwelt in Midia's land
For forty years, a shepherd tending flocks.
But then had come the hour of Ægypt's woe.
He may no more those sheep from wolves protect.
'Tis God's decree that he a mightier flock
Should tear from out the grasp of Ægypt's King,
And as a shepherd guides his sheep, should lead
The Israël of God to Canaan's land.

An awful calm, a silence great had clothed
The mighty peak of Horeb, mount of God,
As thitherward the shepherd led his flock
In 'customed course, towards a mountain glen,
Where oft his kindred's wrong, his nation's toil,
Would crowd upon his loneliness, as hope desired
To hear the sound of the Avenger's foot.

That day by him, in such-like mood employed,
A bush was seen all wrapt around with flame,
Which burning still was of the fire unhurt,
And still remained entire all unconsumed,
And thus perchance continued on to burn
Some while unheeded, as no wonder thought,
Or deemed the act of some chance traveller.
At length, in interval of thought, amazed,
He sees that as when first 'twas seen so now
The bush remains, and tow'rds it turns his steps.
E'en as he turns, forthwith a voice doth break
The' unwonted silence. Awful dread enfolds
Him conscious yet, his bones with trembling shake,
He hears his name, or with his soul discerns
The motions of a spirit's utterance,
And in soft whispers answers, "Here am I."
Then hides his face; for the Eternal One
Proclaims that He is there, and Moses fears
To look with mortal eye on God revealed.
But as his steps, discerning not, draw nigh
Towards all Righteousness, thus is he bid:
"Do not draw hither nigh. Put off thy shoes,
The place whereon thou art is holy ground."
This he obeys, and trembling veils himself,

Whilst from the glory bright he hears God's voice,
Which bade him summon Pharaoh to unloose
The fettered slave, the Hebrews' guile-wrought chains.
But he in courage failed, his confidence
Was weakness found, and thus his answer ran:
"Lo, who am I to go to Pharaoh's court
From Ægypt's land, Thy people to bring forth?"

O trembling student of the Word of Life!
Ensaddened much by doubt, and deeming oft
Thyself for weakness cast aside, behold,
And courage take! O look! not here, but there
Where God doth speak. He with His creature pled,
Four times confirmed his faith, and showed Himself
The sole existing one, I AM, Who gave
The life of beast or tree, Who ordered Man
In life and health, from Whom all sickness came,
Who bade the gods of Ægypt do His will,
And would endow the faltering tongue with speech.

But such forbearance strengthens not the faith
Of Moses to withstand the impatient wrath
Which his outspoken message would arouse

In Pharaoh* Sethos, Ægypt's haughty King.
He further urged—"Oh, send some other one!"
And stayed his speech, all powerless to speak.
For though e'en this poor hope was not denied
In full: yet was displeasure shown thereto,
That he might learn how to endure Man's wrath
As having seen the wrath of the Invisible.
But He, the Merciful, hath kept this wrath
Among His hidden things, and spread His veil
O'er it. Yet in the granting of the prayer
By Wisdom we may trace some steps thereof.
For that apportioned cup, so amply filled
With glory all for one, was thenceforth shared,
And 'midst the chosen tribes another stood
Second to him, but unto him alone,
A fountain, whence there issued joy and grief,
His brother Aaron, who should gladly speak
The words of Moses, and from Ægypt came,
All wondering, forth, expecting his return.
'Twas then in sign of embassage was given
The marvel-working rod. And silence reigned.
On Horeb's sides the still small voice was heard

* Pharaoh is generally used as a simple title, "the King," &c., seldom as a name.

No more. No sign of Nature's God was seen.
Except the awful calm which stilled all sound,
And in his breast its own response received,
Moses all vainly sought; nought else there showed
That in the presence of the Holy One,
The everlasting God, he lately stood.
His flocks he leads down Horeb's sacred sides,
Himself content that righteous will to do.

Straightway the halls of Jethro Moses sought,
And won from him permission to depart,
And seek the brethren left behind of him
In Ægypt's land, and learn their life or death.
Thus bidden of him to go in peace, assured
By God of safety in the way, he trode
The road o'er which a fugitive he fled,
When first he raised his hand in Jacob's help.
And journeying thus, he in the holy mount
Was met by Aaron, sent by voice of God
To meet his coming steps. But who shall tell
What joy the brothers knew, when there was bridged
The gap affection felt from two-score years
In separation passed by those who loved,
As mother's children loved in former days?

From Aaron first the salutation came
In words of fearing joy, and hoping doubt.
Strange mixture, mingled in his heart by Time,
Who marks his rolling years on every face
Whose birth he sees, and recollection sweet,
That holds the same remembrance in its eye
And ever keeps for ever fresh and new
The form its loved one held, and knows no change
Of days, or months, or years, of youth or age.
Uncertain whom he saw, yet filled with hope,
'Tis thus that Aaron spake his heartfelt thoughts:
"Whose form is this I see? O stranger! why
Do I thus gaze upon that form of thine?
Why is mine heart extended thus tow'rds thee?
Thy form doth seem familiar to mine eyes,
And in the deep recesses of mine heart
There lies concealed a well-remembered name,
A name most dear,—a brother's name,—one lost
To me for forty years. I looked on him
With more than wonted love; for I did think
That taught, as he had been, in all the lore
Withheld by Pharaoh's dread decree from us,
And those who share our hard captivities,
He was the one appointed to redeem

The oath, once sworn to Abraham, the friend
Of God, since then renewed to Israël.
But ah! my hope, as well as his, proved vain!
His mind and mine were one in this; he sought
To show himself the leader of our race.
He sought! but whilst our doubting elders asked,
'Is this the appointed one? Is this the man?'
'Twas then to Pharaoh's face this word was said,—
'Freedom for Israël the saved one seeks.'
Forthwith a friend on hasty message ran,
And those sad tidings unto Moses brought.
At once my brother fled, and hence these eyes
For forty years have looked for his return,
And looked in vain. But lately as I mused,
And thought upon his fate, I seemed to hear
That he yet lived. A most mysterious voice,
Or sound of flattering hope, hath bid me leave
The daily task, and hither bend my steps.
I think I heard a voice, and thus it spake:
'Go to the wilderness, and Moses meet.'
Oh, tell me, stranger! tell me, art thou he?"
Aaron in silence stood; then Moses spake,
But with more measured tones, befitting one
Whose soul was filled with that unspoken calm,

Which, issuing from the holy presence, smooths
The passions of the human breast, that they
(Like to a mountain lake which, girt about
With rocks and hills, doth in its basin rest,
A scene of nature, lovely, beautiful,
Entrancing every eye, but valued most
By those who nigh thereto receive their birth,
Or 'midst its loveliness their childhood pass),
All calmed, subdued, might be beloved by all;
Most loved by those who in their presence dwell.

" Aaron, unto mine anxious heart thy words
Confirm mine hope. Behold in me thy brother.
And I for forty years in Midia passed,
Have looked for this return, as well as thou;
But dared not hither come, until the time
Appointed was declared to me arrived.
And thus hath mine affection waited long
For this our mutual happiness. But now
The night is passed; the dawning light doth break
The darkness o'er us thrown, and Israël
Shall taste long-looked-for Canaan's promised fruit.
Great cause of joy this meeting gives to me,
Exceeding, far exceeding brotherhood.

It is an earnest of the mission borne
To Israël, and unto Ægypt's King;
First given to me, in which thou art to take
A second part, and hold a second place;
A mission wonderful, which God will soon
To full fruition bring, when He shall bare
His holy arm, and lead His people forth.
The sounds of these glad tidings were the cause
Of that mysterious voice which thou didst hear,
And which, like thee, with strainèd ear I heard
On Horeb's mount, as thou shalt know; but first
The tale of these long forty years my heart
Expecting waits for thee to tell. This done,
Then shalt thou hear the gracious words of God."
He said, and the red glow in Aaron cried:
"What sounds replete with happiness! what words
Were those I heard? Oh, wherefore didst thou cease?
Can it be true that now my grief hath found
That which for forty years I've sought in vain,
And even hither came to seek, which found,
Doth seem a prize too great for me to grasp?
Yea, am not I deceived? Doth not my wish
In pleasant mood of day-dream sport itself?
It is not so! Thy form remains erect,

Flies not, like form of fleeting thought, my touch,
And to mine inmost heart a whisper speaks
That all is true, that thou my brother art.
Oh, thanks! all thanks to Him who kept thee safe;
Oh, thanks! all thanks to Him who sends the grace,
Which now thy words have full strong promise given,
Shall soon be shown to the captivity.
But how can I thy kindly wish fulfil?
How can I tell to thee the woeful tale
Of these long forty years, in bondage passed
By Israël? When thou thyself didst hold
The place of Pharaoh's daughter's son, and stood'st
In Ægypt's realm the nearest to the throne,
Thou wast unable to alleviate
Our then unhappy lot. But how much worse
Would it become when thou wast gone! Yea, when
The single voice by thee upraised was lost,
No pitying eye, no beating heart remained
For us. Our spirits quailed beneath the strokes
Of masters o'er us set. They cried to gods—
To God they did not cry. Oh, would they had!
But He hath seen us all the while, and now
I know hath pitied us. And thus my heart
Doth with impatience wait for thee to tell

The gracious purposes He hath tow'rds us."
Then Moses said: "I feared, yea, knew 'twas so,
When I, as son of fair Thuoris, dwelt
In regal court, and in the council sate.
Respect to her, her well-known care and love,
Awed powers and chiefs to silence who oft else
Had fierce inflamed the monarch's rising dread
Of Israël. 'Twas thus that in those days
The task increased not, although 'tis true
I had no power to mitigate its force.
But, ah! my sole restraining voice was lost
When for dear life I fled. 'Twas then the rage
Which Ægypt's nobles long within their breasts
Had hid, would issue forth like flames of fire
On our devoted race. But God hath heard
Our cry, and lo! I now will tell to thee
The gracious words which He hath bid us speak
To Israël, in conclave duly met."
He said, and unto wondering Aaron told
The tale of his own doubt, of God's free love,
And mercy manifest. Suffice to say
That Aaron's heart was glad, as thus he heard
The mercy now in heavenly councils fixed,
Determined portion given to Israël,

In hard and cruel bondage held by those
'Midst whom, as sojourners, they came to dwell.

And now, when one from other each had heard
The lot and changes of his brother's life,
And Aaron too had felt the Spirit's power,
Which bade him, all consenting, be the voice
Of Moses speaking unto Israël,
Or Pharaoh, as true wisdom should direct,
They journeyed tow'rds the far-famed land, where dwelt
Their brethren; and, conversing, still thought o'er
The future lot, the future destiny
Of their strange race, which, numerous as the dust,
In numbers like the heavenly stars should be
Uncountable, and from 'midst whom should spring
That Greatest One, the Blessing of the Earth.
At length, arrived in Goshen, Aaron sought
The Elders of the People. They were men
Renowned for their long days and prudent care,
Elect of the twelve tribes to overrule
All chance disputes, and for their kin to watch
Whate'er might give hope, or encouragement
Of the expected leader who should break
The hard and bitter bond of slavery.

But yet he firstly sought the Elder Chief,
Who great in age then guided Israël,
To whom he said: "O thou of Jacob's sons
Now living, eldest born! Thou knowest me,
Who oft hath sate not far below thy seat,
When thou the council of our years hast sought.
And is it not our wont from ancient days
Brought down, that we ourselves must come, if e'er
We see sufficient cause, that thou shouldst call
The Elders, yet allowed, to meet thee here?
Sufficient cause this day I see, and crave
That thou wilt send thy messenger forthwith,
And summon us. Behold, one hither comes
Bearing a word foretelling greatest good
To all our race. He is of Jacob born;
His age is great; well versed in wisdom's lore,
He comes from One intent to do us good,
As thou shalt surely know. But 'tis my wish
That I may tell his kindly purposes
Unto the Elders, in assembly met.

"Aaron," replied the sage, "to thy request
I willingly accede. Oft hast thou ruled
Our thoughts by that persuasive eloquence

Which dwells in thee ; and of a truth I know
This meeting had not been desired, unless
Consideration, and reflection due,
On it bestowed, thy wisdom had convinced
Beyond all doubt of its necessity.
But other reason more inclines hereto,
For as I listened to thy words I thought
That then some other power bestirred my breast,
And with its influence bade me forthwith give
Accedence unto thee, and summon all
Our chosen Elders, as thou hast desired.
Nor this alone, but to arrange it thus
That Israël may hear with them thy words.
Thou hast a message in its import great
To all of Israël, therefore thy words
Shall e'en this night be heard by our twelve tribes
Assembled 'neath the full moon's lustrous beams."

He said, and Moses at the due set time
With Aaron to the' assembled people came,
When thus the Elder first the tribes addressed :
" O sons ! O children unto Jacob born !
O ye from Joseph called ! Ye know how one
Of Levi's tribe, a child to Amram given,

Doth stand 'mongst all of us pre-eminent
For wisdom, counsel, and for eloquence,
By whose advice we have been guided oft
In matter difficult. He made request
Of me this day to bid our Elders here.
But I have thought it good that all of ye
Should listen to the matter, deemed of him
As one of great concern to Israël.
He doth your pleasure wait, and with him stands
One who seems strange to me, whose features tell
That he claims kindred with our tribes. Perchance
His coming brings our brother Aaron here,
For, in his mien, I see great dignity
Of soul; his eye doth seem as if 'twould pierce
My heart, mine inmost thoughts discern. Yet still
He seems not to have shared our lot of woe.
I think concealed within his breast lies hid
A grounded hope of some great good for us.
Aaron, stand forth! and to thy brethren speak
Your mind! We all with expectation wait
To hear thy promised speech." At this command
Aaron stood forth, and thus to him replied:—

"O children of the promise long since given

To Abraham, the friend of God! O Chiefs!
Well have ye hither come; for I this day
Do bring you tidings which shall make your hearts
Within you burn, and leap for joy. But first
I seek short favour, whilst unto your minds
An oft-heard tale I bring,—one known of all,
Although but few of us its age have lived.
In childhood, some their parents may have heard
Relate what yesterday brought terror forth.
Few have with manhood's age its whispers heard.
Ye know that when the royal mandate bid,
That Death's dread veil should overshadow all
Our males, ere yet the mother's arms had clasped
Her new-born son, or yet his infant cry
Had woke Affection's breath, emboldened then
My mother Jochebed the monarch scorned,
And daringly her son concealed alive,
Until she could no longer hide her boy
From those who ruthlessly had spilt his blood.
Yet loath to see him die, she made an ark
Of rush, and slime, and pitch, concealed in which
She laid her child beside the river's bank,
Amidst the flags in shallow waters grown,
Entrusting it unto the carefulness

Of Him, who had in times gone by preserved,
'Midst threatened storm, the fathers of our race.
Nor did He prove unfaithful to the charge;
For thus it chanced, that while with vexèd heart
And heavy breast, Miriam my sister watched,
Short distance off, that she might know the end,
And swift convey the news of grief or joy
Unto the mother's ear, she saw the train
Of maidens, noble, fair, who vied for smiles
From Pharaoh's royal daughter's face, draw nigh
Unto the spot where stayed her brother's bark.
And of her own experience taught full well,
That woman's heart doth feel a woman's grief,
She all her prudence left, and nigher drew
To where the royal maiden stood, and saw
That Pharaoh's daughter on the weeping babe
With pity looked, then she, beseeching, said,
'Oh, may I go, and bring a nurse to thee?
A Hebrew, too! to nurse this child for thee!'
And this, her bold request, acceptance found;
For Pharaoh's daughter said, 'We bid thee go.'
My sister gladly her command obeyed,
And to my mother told the joyous news,
Who, happy, to the Princess ran, received

From her the child, reclaimed by royal will
From Death, and to parental arms again restored
For nourishment and care through its young years.
But these fulfilled, the Princess further chose
That self-same child as her adopted son,
And named him Moses, as a sign to all
That she had saved his life. 'Twas thus he took
Amongst the nobles of this land a seat,
Midst whom for nighly forty years he sate
A chief; for of their wisdom he had learnt,
And profited, and thus was known of all,
As mighty both in word and deed. Still more,
If such had been his wish, he might have reigned
The Pharaoh, all his days Ægyptian King.
So far ye know. And likewise too have heard,
How 'twas his choice to be but one of us;
His hope, to break our dire captivity.
But when this purpose was declared of him,
We feared, and, still amidst our fear, the news,
That Moses sought to free the Israëlite,
Was told to Pharaoh, who decreed his death,
And sent the captains, messengers of ill,
To take his life-blood; thus to stay his hand.
But he, forewarned, their coming knew, and fled

To Midia's land. For forty years I heard
No news of him, and all esteemed him dead.
Yea, in my heart alone hope lingered on,
When some few days gone by, I heard a voice
Which was the voice of God. It bade me go
Unto the wilderness, to meet Moses.
I, as of nature driven, obedience paid,
And met him wending hitherwards his way
Along the Mount of God. What he there said,
That was the cause of my preferred request.
He stands with me, and will this day confirm
My speech, as I unfold to your glad ears
The cause of his return. When Moses fled,
He sought the land of Midia; there he dwelt
A shepherd tending princely Jethroe's flocks,
Till as, some few days passed, on Horeb's vales,
Amidst those giant solitudes, he sought
Them pasturage, a vision wondrous rose
Before him; 'twas as if a wanton hand
Had with wild fire inflamed a bush, which grew
From out the cleft of one great rock,
Apart from all its fellows, greatest of its kind.
It but in semblance burnt, 'twould not consume.
This Moses saw, and turned aside to know

What cause or virtue kept it thus entire.
But turning thus, the Angel of the Lord
Proclaimed His presence, and declared Himself
His father's God—the God of Abraham,
Of Isaac, and of Jacob. Yea, He said
That our affliction He had seen, and heard
The cries of our entreaty, which had risen
On high, there borne by these our taskmasters.
For unto Him was all our sorrow known.
Hence was He come for our deliverance,
And to bestow on our afflicted tribes
A land full large and good, wherein both milk
And honey, like full running streams, abound.
He bade him hither come, and let you know,
O Chiefs, the words which ye have heard from me,
That ye may with us come to Pharaoh's court;
Therein to tell this meeting with our God,
And seek the King's permission to depart
A three days' journey to the wilderness,
To sacrifice unto the Lord our God.
Do not, I pray ye, think that we shall go
Alone, or in our strength. The Lord hath said
That He will go with us, and guide our speech.
Yet this know well, that Pharaoh will deny,

Yea, will refuse to grant the sought-for leave.
But vainly shall refuse. He shall not add
One day, or part of day, for us to dwell
In Ægypt's land, in this captivity.
Behold, the heavenly King will bare His arm
In our defence, and will His wonders work
On those who forged our chains, retain them still.
For He will break the bonds, and burst the gates,
Which stand 'twixt this and that our promised land.
Yea, our departure shall behold us filled
With Ægypt's spoil, upon ourselves bestowed
By those who, struck with mighty dread, shall beg
Of us to go, and shall with gladness see
Our many tribes bid Ægypt's land farewell.
My words are done, and now it lies with you
To give reply. Consider well on them.
Advise yourselves, and then declare your minds."

As when a rushing mountain blast bestirs
The placid waters of an inland sea,
So rose the deafening sound of voices there,
When Aaron ceased. At length the Elder thus
The end of their deliberation spake:
"Aaron, thy words, received of us in truth,

Would be glad tidings of great joy; e'en now
Have they aroused within our hearts such hope,
That, if we dared, we would believe them true.
But we have seen no sign, we have not heard
The Name by which the Lord revealed Himself.
Therefore we doubtful stand. Our prudence waits
From thee some further speech, before we dare
Receive thy words as true. For thou dost know
How Pharaoh would rejoice if good excuse,
By our subdued uprising, should be found
To decimate our tribes. We therefore fear
At once to give accedence unto thee.
For Pharaoh's armèd strength is far too great
For us, unaided, to rebel and claim
That which to all is dear—our liberty."

His words were scarcely o'er, when Aaron thus:
"Oh, wonderful decree of God! that good
From evil overruled by Him should spring.
Oh, Chiefs and Elders! know that Moses feared,
Like you to dare the' impassioned Pharaoh's ire.
He made the same request of God which ye
This day have asked. To him that Holy Name
Was told, that ye might learn. Oh that the Lord

Will overpass me now, as I reveal
To you that Name—the Holy Name of God!
The Great I AM hath sent me unto you.
That is His name, and His memorial
To all mankind. Your asking I have told.
The open sign awaits my brother's word."
He ceased, and ere the voice of Elder broke
The hush spread by the spoken Name of God,
Moses to Aaron said: "Take thou this rod,
And cast it from thine hand." Hardly received,
It was by Aaron cast upon the ground;
Forthwith 'fore all it moved, it changed its shape,
And as with wondering awful fear they gazed,
Behold, it glode a serpent o'er the ground,
Not suffered long to glide. Soon Moses bade
Aaron stretch forth his hand. He firmly seized
The glowering snake, which seized, was once more wood.
Ere yet their wonderment had ceased, Aaron
A second awe-inspiring symbol wrought,
Which showed the living dead, the dead restored
To life, as God's Almighty Wisdom bade.
But now of sign and symbol taught, all gave
Consent, and bowed in faithful worship low.
Then from the Elders chose they Elders few,

The representatives of Israël,
Who with the brethren should that morning tread
The court where Pharaoh Sethos audience held.
Passed they the warrior nobles, scornful chiefs,
By whom Israëlitish touch was deemed
Disgrace, pollution, or contagious woe
Of evil, staining their fair fame with blots,
Not weightless in Amenti's balance, feared
By Ægypt's peasants, priests, or dreaded King.
These nigher drew their garments as they saw
Moses draw nigh. But he, undaunted, told,
Whilst awe upon the courtiers fell, the words
He had received in Horeb's solitude.
These Pharaoh heard. Amazed, short moment sate
All silent, then in scornful laughter thus
His answer ran, of Power unalterable:
"Who is the Lord, that I His voice should hear,
Obedience pay, and let Israël go?
I know Him not! Neither will let you go!"
Moses replied: "O Sethos! may'st thou reign!
The Lord, our God, hath met with us. Permit
Us now to go, we pray thee, lest He fall
On us with Pestilence, or with the Sword.
O King! His wrath's dread portion would not fall

On us alone. The Lord would pour on thee,
And o'er thy realm, the fierceness of His wrath.
Couldst thou endure? Thy gods could not withstar
That wrath, which unrestrained of Him perceives
No difference, nor yet an equal knows.
Oh, anger not the Lord! but let us go."

In answer thus the King: "Why hinder ye
The work of Israël? Haste ye! Begone!
Perform your tasks! For yet within the land
The people are too many! Since your word
Hath bid them leave their burdens, I command
My taskmasters, henceforth give ye no straw
Unto your bands, but let them gather straw.
Take heed! Diminish not the tale of bricks
Which they have wonted made. I know full well
From idleness they cry to me, and say,
'Let us depart, and sacrifice to God.'
Therefore let heavier, harder tasks be set,
For slaves should work, and not regard vain words:'

He ended speech. His mandate thence was borne
By swiftest runners forth. And ere two suns
Had o'er the captives set, a bitter cry

Of misery, despair, and woe arose
From all the tribes. Men laid them down to die,
And women weeped, all helpless facing death,
Which was of all in the stern mandate read.
And lo! the Elders with disfigured robes
Fell down at Pharaoh's feet; his mercy sought
For them, their tribes, his subjects and his slaves.
But he, proud monarch, proudest of his race,
Gave them no heed, nor deigned to hear their cry.
Hence 'twas that meeting Moses, waiting them
With Aaron, they cried out in bitterness,
As sighs of lamentation stayed their voice,
"Oh, wherefore didst thou come? Why hast thou placed
The sword of our destruction in the hands
Of these our foes? Is this the promised help,
So sure? Oh, why left thou us not alone?"
Them Moses sorrowing heard. He took their cry
To God, and thus in deep sad anguish prayed:
"Lord, why hast Thou entreated evilly
This race? Why didst Thou send me unto them?
For since I went to Pharaoh in Thy name,
He hath sent evil upon Israël,
And Thou hast not delivered them at all."

Then spake the still small voice; for whose reply
We look within the Book, and gather thence
The strength, the pith of that which Moses heard.
For to mè, mortal, it appeareth best
To speak of things as done, not to repeat
Those dread, yet simple words, which were not hid,
But by God's servant audibly received.
He heard that Pharaoh's great excessive fear
Should urge the swift departure, now refused.
For, lo! the God of the three chiefs, whose days
Were by their children, now enslavèd, blessed,
Though of them known, the Almighty God, there spoke;
And for His servant's sake revealed His Name,
His Greater Name, not heard, not known of old—
E'en that Eternal and Essential Name,
Which thus the fearing Hebrew speaks, "Jehovah."
For He regarded still His covenant,
Wherein He swore that He would give to them
The land through which as pilgrims they had passed.
He bade His servant say to Israël,
That He, the Lord, remembered yet His oath;
He swore by His Great Name yet to reveal
Its promised wrath—its blessings to bestow.

God's bidding, Moses told to Israël ;
But cruel bondage held in unbelief
Their hearts, so that they hearkened not. Then God
His servant once more bade to Pharaoh speak.
But, wonderful ! though he had seen such sights
As of mankind but few had ever seen,
He doubted, nor had yet retained that strength
Which comes when as a child man trusts in God.
He pleaded that as they had hearkened not
To him, though born of Israël, it seemed
All past belief that Pharaoh should regard
The words of one whom he despised and scorned.
His doubt was thus reproved. God gave His charge
Once more to Moses' trust. He from its words
Encouragement received, and forthwith sought
His brother Aaron, whom he found, then went
To Memphis, where arrived, Aaron addressed
Proud Sethos thus : " O Pharaoh ! monarch dread !
Most mighty lord of Ægypt's far-spread realm !
Once more thine house-born slaves before thee stand.
We wish long life and health to thee, and hope
That the Heart Changer may dispose thine heart
To listen to our speech, which we this day,
According to His will, before thee speak.

Oh, wonder not that we, the lowliest ones,
Should have received a message from the Lord!
His ways thou know'st are all unsearchable.
Lo! He is powerful, and reigns supreme!
We pray thee, bow thy head to His decree.
For He hath sworn His purpose to fulfil,
Yet loathes to pour out wrath, and therefore bade
That we should once more ask thy leave for us,
And all our tribes, to quit thy realm in peace.
Oppose Him not, we pray thee, but appoint
The time, the day, the hour for us to go.
Thus shall His favour be tow'rds thee, O King!"

Impatient and enraged, at such bold speech,
Proud Sethos stayed more words, as loud he cried:
"Where is the sign? Show me some mighty work,
That I may know the power of this thy God,
And that thy words are truly His, not sprung
From craftiness or guile." Aaron replied,
"Oh, King! 'twere easy for the Almighty God
To show His power, or with a word to quench
The life of all that He hath made. He reigns
One Lord o'er all. He hath made all, and gives
To each his work apportioned to his post.

He feeds, supports, clothes, nourishes all life;
Yea, in His grasp the worlds upheld roll round.
Could He not awe, or greatly terrify
His creature man? Could any stay His hand?
But He delights in full obedience given
With the free heart, and ever seeks to draw
By love, before that He compels by wrath.
Therefore the Lord, foreknowing well, O King,
This thy request, hath bid me show to thee
A sign by which thou certainly may'st know
That He o'er all, as God Almighty, rules,
That we, thy slaves, are sent by Him this day
To tell thee His most holy will." He ceased
And straight before the monarch cast his rod.
But cast, 'twas gone! A serpent glared around!
Forthwith proud Sethos cried, "Ye messengers,
Make haste! Before our presence quickly bring
Magicians, sorcerers, astrologers,
And whomsoe'er asserts that in him dwells
Knowledge, more excellent than others boast,
That they, on pain of death, may do like deed
To this, which now our doubting eyes have seen,
Above suspicion, plainly done, thence wish
To know, by equal proof, if Ægypt's gods

Can do the like. If not, then must I yield
Submission to the God of these two men,
And let the race which in captivity
I hold go free—lose half my battled strength.
Therefore, behold, let all the learnèd search
Their knowledge o'er, and take good heed, lest they
Do shortly lose their heads ; a fit reward
For all the blasphemy and lying words
By which they oft have caused our royal mind
To deem them men of superhuman power."

Such order heard, forthwith obedient,
Impelled by dread of wrath, his servants ran
To call the wise, and those reputed wise,
To show their skill before his face. They came,
They saw, and having heard his dread command,
In semblance or in truth his word performed.
He gladly saw ; no further proof required,
As hope within his heart sought fair pretext
To disregard those men, whose coming gave
The strongest proof that they had told no lie,
But truly spake what they themselves had heard,
And dared not disobey. Full well he knew
Some mighty cause must move within their breasts,

That they had dared this second time to bring
That same request, which when afore preferred
By them some few days gone, he drove them forth
With rage, and bade them to their work. His wish
He thought obtained; he thought he saw pretext
To disregard, and deem as nought their words.
'Twas hence he quenched the inward urging voice
Which prompted him to do the one great deed
Of justice, that had freed his land, his race
From all that wrath which, soon on Ægypt poured
Is yet a word of dread to all mankind.
Perchance, alike the' Assyrian King, he spake
Great blasphemy, and as the heavenly power
Declared his might; we know not this, we know
He hearkened not. And hence with heavy hearts
The two, from Amram sprung, his presence left;
For now they knew that Heaven's decree was fixed.
Jehovah's wrath was on him to be poured.

BOOK II.

FEAST OF APIS — FIRST PLAGUE — ISRAEL — SECOND PLAGUE — PHARAOH'S SET TIME — NIGHT — CONCLUSION.

On Ægypt's yearly festal day the priests
Of Bethshemish, arrayed in temple robes
By Nile's wide stream, stood waiting Pharaoh, Priest,
Sole Ruler of both Realms, that he might lead,
As their great mysteries bespake, the forms
Of worship unto Apis, Ægypt's God.
Not long they tarried, nor attendants stayed
On either side the crowding multitudes,
Lest vulgar eyes, too venturesome, should learn
The acts, more secret, which their faith performed
To Ptah, and Ra, and hated Typhon, feared
As the destroyer of all good, who wrought
All evil and rejoiced in plagues of heat.
Amidst them there, behold the sacred bull,
Esteemed a god, or god's similitude,

Whose term of life was of his creature fixed
With limit unsurpassable ; which reached,
They led him to the river-side, and bade
Osiris' fancied soul, "Search thou the stream ;"
Then blessed anew the flood of Isis' tears,
And feigned to seek the god themselves had made.

Soon Pharaoh Sethos, haughty priest, drew near,
With princes, nobles, lords, and counsellors,
Whilst all the pomp of Ægypt's splendour gave
Him honour ; but, from 'midst the throng, there came
Two Hebrews forth, and in his pathway stood ;
Whom seen, a shade of coming evil filled
His spirit, and Moses there, as to a king,
God's message spake, the first dread plague announced
In language thus : "Let thou us go, or else,
Thus saith the Lord our God, from whom I come :
'These running waters shall flow down in blood.'"
Then unto Aaron gave the Rod of Power,
Who shortly with it smote the Nile, then turned
His steps, with Moses to depart, and leave
The curse of God its work of ire to do.
Them Sethos heard. Amazed, he silent stood,
As when loud thunder stills the' else bravest soul.

No priest or courtier dared, no soldier dared
To raise his hand in hindrance of their way.
All let them go, felt glad when they were gone.

Full tardily was that dread silence broke
As Sethos said, "Encourage ye yourselves;
Come prove ye now yon madman's speech as vain.
Great Apis will his mighty power reveal,
And give to us the 'customed waters sweet,
For which we bless with grateful hearts our gods."

Thus far he spake, and tarrying not, commenced
The sacred rites of that chief festal day.
Alone he in the priestly cordon went;
But thither gone, an agèd priest well filled
The pure refinèd golden sacred bowl
With that which hastily he water deemed.
Then with low bows, and chanting many prayers,
Gave it unto the king to taste and bless.
But Pharaoh's face grew pale: he cried aloud:
"'Tis blood! 'tis blood! Those Hebrews are true men!
But no! They are false! Magi, my words confirm!
Or else my great displeasure shall alight
Upon yourselves, and all who may presume

With you to say, 'Those Hebrews truly spake.'"
Forthwith with water from the darkening stream
A horn was filled. And, versed in solemn form,
The Magi looked therein, then o'er it spake
Some words uncouth, terrific in their sound,
Whilst they bethought them cunning craft to cloud
The monarch's eye. With mystic air they gazed;
But gazing thus, e'en then, like her who wrought
In Endor's cave such arts, they trembling saw
There was no need for aught chicanery,
And cried: "Here's blood, O king! Here's blood for you!"
And well they cried. For now from lowest depths
The Lord's dread curse e'en to the surface came,
And Nile's fair stream, reddened as blood, ran down,
Conveying terror to the nation doomed
By sin unpurged, in its entirety great,
Whose cry for vengeance ushered in that plague.

Proud Sethos, though awe-struck, yet taught of Pride,
There deadened better impulses, and said:
"Enough; it is enough. The gods are true.
This is the deed of Apis, Ægypt's god."
Then to the Magi large reward decreed,
As proof of merit, services performed;

And, with a hardened, saddened heart, his face
Turned homeward, studious to forget that woe;
If cares of royal state, or Memphian hall,
Could bid oblivion o'er that sight arise.
Vain thought! Dread consternation reigned supreme;
Ay, in his palace ever and anon
Low whisperings hoarsely said: "More blood! more blood!"
He, terror-struck, his inner chamber sought,
Which was to man death-sealed, inviolate.
Yet all the high-born royal train who filled
Those halls were motionless, aghast with fear.
Nor only thus; but every noble's house,
Or temple court, or peasant's hut, contained
Astonishment, and still increasing dread
Of coming wrath, and evil to be borne.

That day unto the bowl of sacrifice
A priest drew nigh; all terror-struck, he turned,
And left the offering unoffered still.
The handmaid filled a cooling vessel full,
And poured out gently on her lady's hands:
Both cried with horror's cry. The convict raised
A drinking-horn unto his parchèd lips,

But flung it down, unemptied, and undrank;
For blood each saw; for blood each vessel filled;
And from far-distant Thebes the Nile ran down
In all its streams as blood. Its fishes died;
The thirsty people sought to quench their thirst,
But loathed the once-loved stream, its wave abhorred;
And, urged by mad despair, swift dug them wells,
Whose depths might yield life's current, else refused;
But ere the cool and moistened earth was raised,
Yea, ere the curse a three-days' length had lived,
Behold, prolific Nature o'er the flood
Of the great river moved, as its lost tribes
Upon the surface floated powerless.
Yet still sad Ægypt, frenzied in her thirst,
Dug on, and gladdened to the waters reached.
But oh! of what a different taste were they
To those sweet waters which the Nile had given,
When by the God of Israël 'twas blessed!
None found but brackish water, and unfit
For drink, yet was that drunk with feverish haste
By those who thus obtained new hope of life.
But pure and wholesome water still remained
In Goshen's land, in Israël's deep wells,
Which had been dug, built up from olden time,

To satisfy in years of drought the flocks
Of numerous sheep, by Ægypt's sons abhorred.

Nor yet the curse had aught abatement shown,
When in the natural course of Nature's laws
The river stank, and Pestilence upraised
Her ghastly head, and gathered to herself
Both men and women who were glad to die,
Escaping thus the burning painful thirst;
Unable of their poverty to pay
The still increasing price which bought the gift
Of water, till that day so free to all.
Nor did she fill with these, the poor alone,
Her hungry maw; for where the wealthy dwelt,
There walked she too, and claimed too soon the debt
Owed by the debtor man. At length a priest
Who oft in far-off Thebes, in Karnak's hall,
Had offered sacrifice unto his gods,
And in their name had watched the river's flood,
As hopeful to appease their wrath, and win
Their aid, said unto prostrate multitudes:
"The plague is stayed; the river's flow doth clear."
And, with the morning sun, the stream was cleared
Throughout the land, and Ægypt breathed new life.

en Sethos, hopeful that the wrath was o'er,
a, that his gods were gods, upraised his head;
est-fallen now no more, he thought to bind
gain in chains of bondage Israël.
it since the plague's dread summons first had breathed
s notes of terror, the appointed tasks,
nce finished, had remained unmeasured still,
s they were left by those who left their work
nseen, unreckoned by the Lords of Toil,
Who, fearful of impendent wrath, had fled;
Iad heedlessly no daily labour set.
ut now the taskmasters fresh courage took,
nd o'er their bands delayed oppression heaped;
heir terror was, lest Pharaoh should discern
hat they had feared, and that for this offence,
o satisfy his own great rage, would send
or them the cruel messengers of death.

ut lo! we turn the page of Anger back,
nd roll aside the veil which Time hath spread
'er Goshen's land, o'er those eventful days.
When first the Israëlites themselves perceived
hat God had poured for them His fury forth,
nd laid with terror low the' oppressor's heart,

Uncertain how to act, yet loath to leave,
Through fear of future pain, their then set work,
They it performed; then in great clusters met
To talk God's favour o'er, and wondering said:
"Can it be true? Shall this day end our grief?
Whither is Moses gone? Where Aaron fled
From us untrue, unkind?" But these, returned,
Had reached the spot where oft the Elders met,
Where stood they then, at evening hour of prayer,
With chiefs of Israël, whom Moses thus
In words of glad encouragement addressed:

"'Tis now some few days gone, O Elders, Chiefs,
Since Pharaoh drove us twain with wrath away,
And forced upon the tribes an undue task.
'Twas then ye all in bitterness of soul
Ourselves reproached, as sons in falsehood skilled.
But whither, O my brethren, had then flown
Your faith in God? Did not His words forewarn
Of the result, short-lived, and yet build up
Your hope? Now hearken! All our words were truth
E'en now the Lord doth send His anger forth
O'er this devoted land! Away with fear!
For He, as our Avenger, hath made bare

This day His arm—on Ægypt poured His wrath,
To free ourselves from this captivity!
Away with caitiff fear! For in His strength,
And guided by His Spirit, instructing me
In times of ease, in times of dread or doubt,
I can, and will, though Ægypt's king say nay,
Lead Israël to Canaan's promised land."

Thus far did Moses speak, ascribing power
To the All-Powerful, Creator, God.
But ceasing then, to him an Elder said:
" Good cause thou hast, that thou shouldst ask of us,
Where was our faith? Where had our wisdom gone?
Since that the gracious promises of God
Had flown from us, as speeds the fleeting cloud.
Yet still, we oft have dwelt upon thy words,
And lo! this day bears witness to their truth.
For as, in haste, we broke our morning's fast,
One hither ran, who these glad tidings bore:
'The banks, which bound the Nile's swift-running stream,
Were filled just now with blood! The fish have died!
And in the reddened current darkly float,
One vast unending tide towards the sea.'

Nor this alone : our taskmasters are fled !
Pierced through with fear, they haste no more our toil!
He asked for you, and said : ' Where are the men
Whom we so late reproached ? so rash drove hence ?
Methinks the hour which they foretold hath come!
Yea, that the Lord hath stretched o'er Ægypt's land
His arm of power, and with His wonders smote
The hearts of its inhabitants with fear.
Oh, let us seek the men we drave away !
And having found, oh, let us beg of them
To blot from memory the past, and take
The leadership of our revolted tribes ! '
'Twas thus he spake. And youth's young face had felt
The rosy hue, betokening sudden shame;
For from smooth lips hoar age had wisdom learnt.
Behold, we ask of thee to take that post,
And trust that thou wilt overlook the words
Which grief of soul once wrung from Israël.
Also we beg, that thou wilt seek for all,
Mercy from the All-Merciful, our God."

Then Moses thus : " 'Tis well, O Elders, Chiefs,
That ye are now submissive to the Lord.
I am His servant, hither sent to you.

I know He doth forgive. He is your King.
He will His word perform, and give our race
The' inheritance He to our fathers swore.
But Pharaoh still will his consent refuse,
And 'gainst the' All-Powerful his weakness weigh.
Afflicted oft, he in due time shall learn
That the One Lord of Israël is Lord
Of this wide world. Fear not, if Liberty
Doth seem to linger somewhat as she comes.
This our necessity compels. 'Twere meet,
That chosen of the Lord, ye should go out,
Like a vast army, ordered in your march;
Not as a scattered horde, tumultuous.
Behold, 'tis late! the evening hours do close!
And Nature's rest your wearied bodies need.
Therefore I now this first direction give.
All the chief heads of Israël must come,
When two nights' length have passed, and meet me here,
That I may then instruct them how to lead
Their several tribes in safety to our rest."

The moon had twice her waning beauty shown;
And every eldest-born of every tribe,
Sprung from the Patriarchal Twelve, had met

In mighty conclave, as their Leader bade.
Then deep unwonted silence spake no lack,
All present there; when Moses thus in speech:
" O all ye heads of every tribe and house!
With joyfulness, exceeding great, I meet
You all. Your presence gives to me a sign
Of future trusting faith in God, your King.
For ye are His, beloved from ages past.
And I, O Israël, am hither come
To teach the first right steps of government
To you, long bound with slavery's cruel chain,
Such steps as will your first great need regard,
And render sure, lest ye through haste should err,
That all of Israël shall safely leave
This land of toil and dire captivity.
For this dear sake, I every tribe enjoin,
Choose ye good men, to go from house to house;
And reckon thus their tribes' united strength.
This done, select ye able chiefs to hold,
In their due ranks, those trusted to their care,
When the glad day of our departure comes.
Then next, with patient thought and search prepare
The chief internal laws, whose voice must rule;
And which each nation's needs require to give,

Unto the good their due encouragement,
But to the bad their well-deservèd fate."

He ended speech. From Reuben's tribe one rose,
And thus for all of Israël replied:
"Moses, thou messenger of God, right good
Is thy advice, for this our chiefest care,
To place beyond suspicion's range, that none
Of Israël on that great day be left
To wear the captive's chain of slavery.
But this our hope, that thou wilt often lend,
To our unskilled deliberating tribes,
The aid which thine excelling wisdom gives."

In answer Moses thus: "The aid which I
Or Aaron can afford, we gladly give
To our consulting tribes. But for my part,
That chiefest work, deliverance, requires
My whole attention, not divided, paid
To it. If hence my absence be for days,
Oh give no place to disappointment's breath!
For sign on sign your gladdened eyes shall see,
And in dread desolating plagues shall read,
That God unto fulfilment brings His word.

Oft must I leave you here. But Aaron's voice
Shall always aid your counsel in the hour,
When matter of deep moment claims your thoughts.
E'en now farewell. Entrust yourself to God;
He is the Lord, and safely shall ye dwell."

Moses alone, in the vast solitude
Of Etham's wilderness, had sought for place
More secret, therein to commune apart
From sight of man, or work of man, with God,
With Nature's God; where Nature hid his cry,
Veiled o'er his prayer, and made his weakness stron
And thus, as he communed, his spirit knew
A still small voice, there entering his being,
Which bade him, "Go! now Pharaoh Sethos warn:
'If thou wilt disobey, behold, I send
A Plague of Frogs innumerable on thee,
Thy realm; nor house nor field shall them escape.'"
Such message Moses heard; fearless obeyed,
And turned his steps the despot's feet to meet.

Full were the many channels of the Nile
With the increasing flood, as Sethos walked
Upon the banks thereof, and Moses met,

As he with Aaron stood, and simply told
God's words. Them Sethos heard; pride-bound refused
The mercy, dared the threatened weight of wrath.
Then turned the brethren back; but turning thus,
Brave Hope from Sethos' breast spread wide his wings
And fled, discerning evil in the sound,
As Woe her baleful shadow nighly threw.

They went not far. For still while Sethos heard
The curse resounding, still could see, or hear,
Aaron, at Moses' bidding, raised the rod,
That dreaded channel of the Threatener's power.
Forthwith it seemed as if the withered spawn,
Which fierce Ægyptian heat had yearly dried,
Then grew invigorate. For forth from stream,
Or sacred lake, or from the river's depth,
Frogs numerous beyond all count came out.
This sight beheld, Pharaoh dissembling said:
"Ye sorcerers! hymn ye your chants!
Call on your gods! bring ye more creatures forth!"
Then cried the Magi; yea, their charms employed;
And, lo, those numbers vast were multiplied.
Deem it not, reader, 'twas the voice of man,
Or power of Satan, but the power of God,

There manifest, which bade. He solely worked.
Till He had spoken, none had dared to bid.

Thus was the voice of Folly's order heard,
And Sethos with dissembled pleasure sought
Seclusion from his courtiers' gaze. His face
Betrayed not there the shame, the baffled pride,
He knew in bitterness of soul. But gloom
Sealed up each tongue, weighed down the nobles' steps,
And spake the' unwelcome truth, which no mouth spake.
Soon was the feast prepared, and all besought
Each other, "Be thou glad! Drink thou thy fill!
Come banish now thy gloom!" Their words were vain.
E'en as the ceremonious servants place
The banquet on the table, richly wrought,
Inlaid with gold, the curse reveals its power;
And in that room, magnificent, adorned
By Ægypt's art, unwonted creatures come.
The servants trembling, terrified, behold,
And lose all power; the courtiers have no voice;
All look with sidelong glances tow'rds the place
Where Pharaoh sits, approachable by none,
With food untasted on his golden plate.
Soon endeth he the universal gloom,

with excuse of unfelt hunger urged,
stayeth not; but in seclusion hides
wrath, his grief; then all the courtiers leave,
:h for his palace home of princely state.

:ire they all to rest, hopeful of sleep;
d sleep proud Sethos found, as well as they,
such was sleep, wherein too dreadful dreams
noise without, of noise within, disturbed
ieir restless rest, their wakeful sleep that night.
ie countryman, returning from his toil,
t wondered much, as thus his troubled thoughts:
Whence come these frogs? and whither do they go?"
he soldier, careless e'en for friend, or foe
pproaching nigh, oft sought to clear his post
rom their increasing crowds; but vainly sought.
he watchman, heedless of their nightly care,
epeated not the warning, wonted cried;
ut to the goddess Ranipula prayed.
t last the morning broke; and Sethos saw
Vhence were his dreams, what made his rest disturbed.
'or light revealed those ministers of wrath,
hose creatures harmless else, which crowding strove
'o hide from the day-beams in niche or nook,

And pushed their loathly forms in every robe,
Which lay arranged, for his approval meet.
Nor hiding thus, they sought at length the couch
On which he lay. Up Sethos sprang erect,
Forgetful of his royalty, and woke
The wonted silent echoes of his court,
Calling aloud for servants else unseen,
Who came; but with all effort vainly sought
To check the Heaven-sent curse, increasing more.
Amazed, the dreaded Pharaoh feared, and sent
His messengers, most swift of foot, to call
The two, whom of all Israël he hated most.

When morning broke, then as in custom went
The people for their bread, they found them none,
For in the ovens, crowding in the troughs,
There ministering God's wrath, they saw that plague
The second vial of Ægyptian woe.
One look they gave, replete with their dismay,
Then each to other in low whispers said:
"The gods have once more smitten us in ire."
The princely lord of fair domain, whose halls
Were wonted filled with luxury and ease,
Felt in full weight the measure of that wrath

Which cried aloud, "Let Israël depart!"
He bade his servants set on food to eat,
And nigh untasted ordered it away;
For there, in past or present, was the plague.
And when before his master's door he stood,
Arrayed in courtly dress, e'en in the hall
Of Pharaoh's majesty, he saw what erst
Had nestled with the mean-born slave, or waked
The echoes round the peasant's cot. E'en as,
With folded arms, he stood before the throne,
Cold pierced his feet, his quivering body shook,
Unknown of him, his gold-emblazoned robes,
Thereby his horror stirred, a creature leapt,
With haste away, unto its kindred life;
Which, in despair, the servants had been bid
Not to disturb, in quietness to leave,
If so their evil might be rendered less.
Behold the curse had entered every house,
Where priest or noble, rich or poor, did dwell.
The fields of growing corn or grass were strewn
With frogs, which sought to hide themselves from day;
All vainly sought! from numbers manifold.
Thus man, untold by priestly lips, perceived
The wrath of Heaven, and ceased his daily toil.

Scarce stayed the sun above Ægyptian clime,
As Moses with his brother Aaron trode
The open court, and before Sethos stood;
Who, humbled now, addressed them thus: "O sirs!
I have done wrong in listening not to you,
Ye men sent unto me by your One God!
Yet, Moses, now entreat for me the Lord,
That He may take away this plague of frogs;
And I will give Israël leave to go,
And sacrifice unto the Lord their God."
Then Moses said, "May Pharaoh Sethos hear!
Do thou exalt thyself! I grant thy wish.
Yea, I will pray to God! That thou may'st know
The God of Israël is Lord of all,
And rules the world, according as He wills,
With Justice, Mercy, Love, and Truth combined.
O Sethos! when shall I entreat the Lord
To stay His hand, and to destroy for thee,
Thy household, and thy people all these frogs?"
Then Sethos hastily replied, "At dawn."
All blindly spoke, by his dread sin deceived.
For wherefore add continuance to the plague,
When one poor word had power to free himself,
And Ægypt's race, from its dread curse at once?

Moses, of Heaven-taught faith supported, said:
"O king! be it according to thy word!
That thou may'st know that like the Lord our God
There is not one. That hour shall end this plague."
He said; then went with Aaron forth those walls,
And cried for Pharaoh Sethos to the Lord;
That He, all full of mercy, would regard
The prayer; for His Name's sake remove the plague
Which He had sent, a curse on Ægypt's realm.

Meanwhile the day was o'er; the night drew nigh.
Then with the softer light those armies woke;
And here and there their hoarse dread summons called,
Awaiting but an answering voice to leave
Their hiding-place, that their advance might fill
With horror, dreader yet, the nation doomed
To wish and seek for sleep, but find it not.
In vain did Pharaoh's festal hour approach;
For in his vast-extended palace courts
There was no place for servant's foot to tread,
And safely bear the banquet to the hall.
And this besides: dismay had wholly seized
The warriors' hearts, and for that day had made
Them hungerless, who else had gladly eaten.

Yea, when they sought them rest, they found it not.
For then the creatures of the night, to whom
Light is as darkness, darkness light, cried out
All ceaseless. Thus discordant voices rose
Through the long hours, as when upon the ear
The' earth-rending water gurgles deafening.

The peasant, wearied with his sought-for task,
Laid down on rudest cot his iron-built frame,
And closed his eyes, for much-desired sleep;
Desired, alas! for Disappointment reigned
That night, and with loud voices bade him sleep,
In mockery bade him sleep, and take his rest!
Enraged thereat, half mad from peaceless rest,
He leapt with frantic anger off his bed,
Intent on driving thence the hateful things.
'Twas vain; for soon as one had gone, its place
Another filled, and croaked with fresher voice.
Despairing then of sleep, he rushed without,
In fancied hope of finding in the fields
A spot wherein to rest his weariness.
But there he found that every place was filled
With men, who wandered here, or wandered there,
As that dread curse impelled them from their homes.

The courtly favourite, whose tongue ran o'er
With words of flattery; who watched each whim
And fancy of his lord, swift to agree
With every argument; who passed his time
Devoid of care, and yet, ingrate, complained
Of dire fatigue, and said 'twere best to die,
Yet courage lacked, there sought oblivion
Of all that grieved and vexed his soul in sleep;
And, languid, closed his weary eyes for rest.
Full soon his dreams were vivid, and declared:
"Thou may'st not move; a chain continuous
And animate begirts thy form and limbs!
Yea, thou art doomed to hear Death's mournful dirge!
And on thy brow one sits, prepared to clutch
Thine eyes! and, tearing, quench for evermore
The light which thou regardest as thy life!"
With one convulsive plunge he stood erect!
And Nightmare, King of Shadows, following close,
He rushed without, sleep's horror to allay.
Not thus escaped; a new distraction woke
On him unwoke, whose greater horror cast
Him prostrate, now unnerved, inert to earth.

Thus in the court. But where proud Sethos lay,

Or stood all restless, there the plague was most
Endured by man. Man's voice was silent there;
For loud God's armies spake His victory,
As Pharaoh felt abashed, and courtiers knew
His creaturehood, and sorrowing perceived
That all his power availèd nought 'gainst Him
Who thus could speak, create, call Nature forth
Obedient. Amazed, the servants stood apart,
Fearful of dawn, and the fierce storm of wrath,
Which unopposed would burst, as came the hour,
Foretold duration of the second woe.

The night is o'er. The dawn doth break, and lo!
The' Angel of Mercy speeds on pitying wing,
And touches with his mission's power that plague—
Gives it to death, as the' orb of day confirms
The word of Moses, witnesseth his truth.
Not thus was drained the vial of God's wrath.
For sin begets, increaseth punishment,
Which endless seems. Though Mercy's ear had hear
The prayer, and all that plague had died; yet dead,
'Twas laden still with woe; man gathered it,
Like some bad root-crop, into heaps, and left
It in the field, that Ægypt's scorching sun

Might wither it. 'Twas thus in part dried up ;
But more remained, whose deadly breath awoke
Black Pestilence ; she spread her death-born wings,
And smote down terror-stricken multitudes.
But Sethos, erst, had loosed dear Wisdom's hand,
Steeled his proud heart, cast off his fear, and said,
" There is reprieve. Why grant them freedom now ? "
Nor yet had chief or noble warrior learnt
To brave his frown. None fearèd yet the Lord.
They saw the eyeball burning 'neath the brow,
So black, so dark, thence gave untrue advice ;
Thus heaping wrath, which was on Ægypt poured,
All justly poured on disobedient men.

BOOK III.

TIME—THIRD PLAGUE—OPENING OF THE SLUICES—FOURTH PLAGUE — JOURNEY TO GOSHEN—MOSES AND PHARAOH — REJECTION — COUNSELLORS — FIFTH PLAGUE — JOURNEY TO GOSHEN—MOSES AND ELDERS—MOSES AND ÆGYPTIAN NOBLE — PHARAOH AND NOBLE — PHARAOH AND AARON — SIXTH PLAGUE—CONCLUSION.

MEANWHILE the river's loosened strength had burst,
Had overpassed the bounds, flowed o'er the land;
And lo! once more, as the cloud-breaker sent
His first bright beams through the dull misty air,
The greatest Prophet, and the future Priest
Of Israël, proud Pharaoh Sethos sought,
Who saw them come, forbade their speech, and said:
"'Tis vain for you to seek; we will not give
That which ye seek, the freedom of your race."
They sorrowing heard; and with obeisance left
His presence, knowing then full well that words
Alone were futile to divert his will.
But whilst on homeward journey bound, the awe

Of God's own Presence stayed their anxious thoughts,
And Moses heard the summoning voice, which bade,
As Heaven's dread rod of wrath should smite earth's dust,
The third sad cup of Ægypt's woe be poured
Forth on the land. Then Aaron raised his rod.
He smote the ground. And both stood silent there
Some moments few, then on their journey went.

Scarce had they gone, when thus the Monarch Priest
With hauteur spake, addressed attendant chiefs:
"O Princes, of the conquering empire born!
Ye see that peace hath followed on the storm
Of evil, which the adverse Powers bade forth
To terrify our realm, Osiris' gift.
Lo, now the gods, our fathers' sires, have heard
Our oft-repeated cry, and helped their child;
They have our will emboldened, banished fear,
And bid the scornèd Hebrews forthwith leave
The light our presence gives, when they approached
Presumptuous, with petition oft refused
By us. O warrior chiefs! O nobles, hear!
Thus say the gods: 'Should those aught asking ask,
Our speech, contemptuous, shall their prayer deny.'"

Such certain speech his courtiers heard well pleased,
Nor silent stood, but approbation spake.
E'en as they praised, mysterious terror chilled
Their hearts, their breath, as the third woe appeared
On Pharaoh's robes, o'erspread the royal hall.
Once more the summoned Magi came in haste,
Once more sang o'er their hymns; but fruitless sang.
Perforce, they knew a mightier hand than theirs.
Amazed, they cried: "There is God's finger here!"
But Sethos cased in harder steel his heart;
He scorned their voice; and by the silent air
The upraised dust was lodged on man and beast,
All unperceived. But there grew animate;
For lodging, lo, a Plague of Lice burst forth;
Nor only thus. E'en on the very earth
They crawled uncountable, like some huge mass
Whose train advanceth still, and endeth not.

Behold the cloth of Ægypt, so renowned,
So smooth, so fair, so beautifully fine,
Extended o'er the ground, thus to receive
A greater whiteness from the noonday sun:
Behold, its fairness all is gone, and fled.
The weaver sees his cherished hope despoiled,

Claimed by the curse, so loathly numerous.
Thus far I see, and turn mine eyes away;
For me here to unveil that time abhorred,
When man, or beast, with life surrounding theirs
Walked helpless; yea, when hunger bade to eat,
Or thirst to drink, but horror shrank therefrom,
The Muse forbids, pursueth search no more,
Than that dread plague for one long day remained
Unchecked. Then God, who love with anger blends,
Unasked, its force restrained, brought it in bounds
Of 'customed limit, so to render man
Reflection's opportunity, to turn
Aside, by true contrition, direr wrath.
For thus it was, that in the dark still night,
As Moses slept, God called him, bade him warn
Proud Sethos of the fourth impendent woe.

Full nearly to its greatest height had flowed
The river's flood. None but the king could bid
Them open wide the sluice gates. Hence he came
His office to fulfil. "Bid all rejoice,
Expectant of a fruitful harvest year!"
Nor joyous language then. For on the bank,
Lo, Moses stands. He saith: "Let Pharaoh hear!

Thus saith the Lord: 'Let thou my people go,
And worship me, or else I send on thee,
And on thy people, swarms—not on the land
Where Israël doth dwell. I sever them,
That thou may'st know that I am God o'er all.
To-morrow shall this sign be manifest.'"
This message heard, proud Sethos chose the wrath,
Disdained the proffered grace. Then Moses left
Him, all uninjured of the awe-struck chiefs,
Or priests, or people, who for Pharaoh's praise
Had slain him, but for terror of the Lord.

That night was Sethos restless, could not sleep,
For shade of evil, speaking as he dreamt.
He woke with earliest dawn; then saw he there
The insect-swarms, which o'er the city hung,
Black as the clouds, surcharged with summer's rain,
Which hold the sunbeams, stay the coming morn,
Give lengthened course to darkness, and to night.
Up Sethos sprang; nor other aid required,
Enrobed himself, oped wide the door, and bade
His chariot: "Forthwith go to Goshen; bring
The Hebrew thence." Taught of the woe scarce gone,
And of the lesser plagues, offspring of Typhon's hate,

He knew vain were the hope of food, or thought,
Or of aught else, should those great swarms remain
All undiminished. Lo, their sounding wings
Subdued him, anxious, fearful of the day.
For like the soldier, wearied on his march
Through sunburnt land, inhales the rising dust,
So Pharaoh breathed, so Ægypt breathed their plague.
There flew the hosts, which thirsted but for blood,
Who with the armour clothed, sword-piercing tribes
With venomed anger led the army on.
Then, not a lesser curse, flew vaster hordes
Of house-flies, which rapacious claimed all food,
And filled each vessel with their numbers full.
'Twas thus the Air its wingèd myriads sent,
But Earth called far more horrid legions forth;
For creatures loathly, venomous, crawled out
From places unconceived, as if the hours
Of life's creation had commenced afresh.
But as the charioteer in swiftest course
Sped, and scarce stayed his flight, that untried steeds
Might urge him speedier on, he reached fair plains,
O'er which the heavens, devoid of wrath, looked down,
Then drove with slackened pace through Goshen's land.
Ere long he gladly came where Moses stood

With chiefs of Israël, consulting o'er
Their plans for freedom's day, now known as near.
Then humbly said, "O grant thy favour, lord,
And with thy servant come to Pharaoh's court!
Behold, I have been summoned, bid in haste
By Pharaoh's royal lips, to bring thee there."

Then Moses said to Chiefs and Elders nigh,
"See, Pharaoh's courage fails; fear-taught he sends,
Hopeful that we may come, and plead for him,
That the Destroyer's arm may be withdrawn.
We go; we will entreat on his behalf
The Lord our God, who for His glory hears
All prayer, refuseth not Entreaty's voice,
When urged by Faith, submissive to His will.
If Pharaoh yields obedience, well is it
For him, his realm; not so, refusal holds
Wrath yet more fierce, punition more severe.
Wait ye in patience, and your plans mature!
See that Departure's cry doth find you meet!"

Stayed he his speech; then straight with Aaron went
To Pharaoh's court; and stood at eventide
Before the' expectant king, who, tarrying not

Obeisance due, there anxious cried, "Go now!
And, in my land, make sacrifice to God."
But Moses answering urged, "This may not be;
For Israël doth slay a sacrifice
Which ye do worship; hence will feuds arise.
Therefore as God hath bid, so must we go."
Thus far he won concession; Sethos gave
The leave required, besought the journey's length
Might not be long; and there, a suppliant, prayed
Entreaty unto God, that those great swarms,
Sin-bred, might be removed from Ægypt's realm.
Moses, refusing not, declared he went
To pray on Pharaoh's part, that the fourth woe
Might cease. Then counselling true Faith, he left
The court, and prayed for one more day of grace,
One trial of repentance for the king.
God heard his prayer. He took the plague away.
But who hath probed man's black mysterious heart?
For influenced by none, Sethos deferred
That day fulfilment of his word; nor gave
Aught sign of his submission. Thus at dawn,
As on the throne he sate for justice, heard
His people's plaints, he saw their crowds fall back

To either side, as there the Hebrews came,
And Aaron pleaded for Israël's right.

Few were his words, and swift their moments fled;
But gone, no longer even Justice held
Her poise. Proud Sethos drowned her voice, and cast
Decision on the side of evil wrath.
He, scornful, cried, "Must we your freedom give?
Ha! where, and who is He who erst hath sworn
On your behalf? Let Him your freedom give!"
But Aaron further urged: "O monarch dread!
This year, as Ægypt's feasts came round, what deeds
Of power Almighty hast thou not beheld?
For this thy land, and these thy people's sake,
Oh, stay thee now the fiercer wrath withheld!"
Then Pharaoh cried, "What mean these words? Begone!
Dare not to offer counsel! Do we still
In Ægypt reign, the Sovereign Priest, and King?"
Then Moses spake; allayed the threatened storm,
Not suffered yet: "Aaron, it is enough,
We may not longer stay. Let us go hence."
This said, the brethren passed without; but gone,
Their dread remained. Confusion stirred anew
The tempest-waves, which rolled in Pharaoh's breast.

He tow'rds submission half inclined; again
Resistance chose; he bade the people leave;
Since that he would no judgment give, no cause
Would hear. Straight left the' expectant crowds,
None stayed
With Pharaoh, but his counsellers, who sate
Consulting there. Ere long the Hebrews stood
There too. No venturous spirit barred their way.
Awe-girt they entered, and dread silence reigned,
Whilst Moses sought the freedom of his race,
In God's Great Name, which if refused, he warned
Would bring a fierce destroying murrain sent
On Ægypt's beasts, not those of Israël.
No answer Pharaoh deigned. He waved his hand
Impatient, suffering not Persuasion's voice
To plead obedience, as scorning yet
Submission unto aught but his own will.
Thus he, dread monarch, trode another step
On that sad path, which there from honour led
To ruin, humiliation, and disgrace,
As Moses went with Aaron from his court.

Not singly Sethos feared: his counsellors
Who heard God's message knew tumultuous thought,

Swift rising in their breasts, and whispering said,
"What doth the King? Oh, were we well assured
That dread Amenti's gates would not unfold,
Too soon rewarding truth unsought, unasked,
Then might we search the royal records o'er,
And therefrom read the tale of Abraham,
Since which the sun hath rolled his glorious orb,
Diffusing light, for twice two hundred years.
'Twas then, in the long silence of the night,
A Pharaoh heard one calling him, as spake
The Hebrews' God in threatened wrath; forbade
The seeming wrong, and lo, submission changed
The wrath to mercy. When had passed
Two hundred years, this God by Joseph saved
Not us alone, but nations roused from death.
Behold, the Hebrew Joseph gave our wealth,
Our land, to Pharaoh, made him powerful,
Who erst had been chief ruler, not our lord.
If then this God was all omnipotent,
What profit in resistance? Showed He not
Himself compassionate, of mercy full?"

At early dawn, near Pharaoh's judgment-seat,
Or near the treasure-houses, where was stored

The fifth of Ægypt's produce, there arose
These cries: "My Lord, forgive thine erring slave!
My due I ne'er can bring! I cannot pay
My royal Master's share! My horse is dead!
My ox, my ass, have died upon the field!
My camel, swiftest of the swift, is dead!
Oh, spare this year my fifth! Have mercy, chief!"
When wanton hands have poisoned limpid streams,
Where numerous fish played joyous, coursed their prey,
Or basked in waters, once bestowing life,
But from that moment changed, the source of death,
Which slew their tribes, so Ægypt's cattle died,
And heaven, dishonoured, claimed once more her due.

When Sethos heard such cries, sad witnessers
Of Truth, who had forewarned him should he keep
His slave enslaved, to make him sunburnt bricks,
And labour at the tombs, and granaries,
And buildings huge, whereat we moderns gaze
Astonished at their size, his daring fled.
He cried, "Prepare a chariot! Let, O chiefs!
One of you go, and bring those Hebrews back.
But hark! see ye, if aught this day hath died
Of Israël, or if their cattle roam

In health, and 'customed freedom through their fields.
Yet show not such intent, lest otherwise,
Deception-led, ye err, find not the truth."

When Moses came with Aaron to the chiefs,
And elders of his race, of them one rose,
And thus his greeting spake: "O man of God!
Why called they thee away? Doth Pharaoh yield?
Behold! since thy departure we have looked
With much anxiety for thy return.
Not that we feared for thee. 'Twas anxious hope
Of our deliverance, which stirred our minds!
Lo, Pharaoh called thee hence in such hot haste!
Perforce, we thought he feared, and yielded then."

Moses replied, "Ah, nay! For Pharaoh yet
Hath yielded not; but on his power relies.
One time he fears; and straight again resolves
To keep us in his grasp, a captive race.
And so he daily draws down fiercer wrath
On Ægypt's land, from God, the' All-Powerful.
Ye know, that since the Lord bade me depart
From Horeb's Mount, and speak encouragement
To you oppressed, He hath unveiled His strength,

And turned the' Ægyptian water into blood,
To bend that stubborn heart. And since hath bid
The frogs, the lice, and every noxious swarm,
'Teach ye proud Pharaoh his mortality!'
But all hath been in vain. And now, this morn,
The Lord hath sent a murrain forth to slay
The' Ægyptian cattle, as they roam the fields;
And hath declared, He will in safety keep
What Israël doth own. This Pharaoh knows;
And hence may send a trusted chieftain forth
To ascertain my truth. Think not he yields!
That Pride-taught heart will more encasened get,
Until at last the' heavenly wrath shall burst
In one unpitying flame, devoid of grace,
On him, and those o'er whom he proudly rules,
And break for ever this our slavery."

Thus Moses spake; and whilst his voice yet stirred
The full sweet echoes of his hearers' breasts,
A chariot drove in sight, which fast approached
And stayed its course right to where Moses stood.
Then from its golden centre came the chief,
Whose mission bade him search the' Almighty's truth,
If yet the Cattle-slaying Plague had passed

Its foretold boundary, or had restrained
Its unresisted power in Goshen's land.
Not void of fear, impressed with awe, he strode
Tow'rds Moses, with the Elders waiting him.
And courteous, thus his embassage declared:

" O thou, adopted of Thuoris, Queen
Of Ægypt! Thou, O Aaron, jointly armed
With awful power! Behold! I come to you.
My mission this. Pharaoh doth say, 'Come ye,
And with your presence honour now my court.
For I relent. I would again behold
Your faces, hopeful that ye may instruct
Me, asking counsel, whether this, your God,
Will mitigate e'en now His outpoured ire.'
Nor deem I that dread Sethos will deny
Fulfilment of his word, so often passed,
So oft refused. For great repeated signs,
Most wondrous, have from day to day been wrought
On water, man, or beast; whilst ye do give
Acknowledgment, that all your strength proceeds
From One above, who claims supremacy
O'er all, since He, ye say, hath all things made.
But otherwise, attach not blame to me.

For thou, O Moses, know'st the wavering mind
Of the sole Pharaoh; lo! his courtiers fear
The issue, when pure truth doth counsel him."

Then Moses said: "O Prince! experience tells
My now subduèd soul, thy words are true.
Of olden time, I well remember this,
That Sethos oft his vacillation showed
To those of us who studiously observed
What strength of thought was in his mind concealed.
Thou surely know'st how he regarded me,
And haply, canst recall the part I chose,
When with the' Israëlite I cast my lot.
To-day, behold my vindication here.
Reflect, how I then spoke for our Great God;
And that, although for dearest life I fled,
I am returned, still kept by His Dread Name,
To Ægypt's land, the Chief of Israël.
I will accompany you. Should Pharaoh yield,
And loose the bands of our captivity,
Then will the Lord our God withhold His wrath.
But should deception yet again close o'er
His secret purpose, then, O Prince, take heed
Unto my speech. For thus thou may'st be kept

In safety 'midst the' impending wrath, now stayed,
But to be poured, through my poor humble
means,
By Heavenly Power, in vengeance o'er the land.
Come, Aaron; let us go. The chariot waits,
Nor should we more detain the noble here."

Then sped the chariot back. But travelling thus,
Moses, conversing, told the history
Of Israël, and their long sojourn, fixed
Of God. And no displeasure found,
He in continuance spake of his swift flight
From Pharaoh's wrath; and of his safe abode
In Midia's land, a shepherd tending flocks.
Although the chieftain partly knew such tale,
He ne'er till then had heard it fully told.
And on it musing, often would he ask
Himself how all o'erruling was the God
Who thus had kept, and reared for His own time,
The race he had of old despised, the sons
To Jacob's children born in Ægypt's land.
Hence he determined to befriend and aid
Their cause amongst the nobles of the Court,
That they with him might favour Israël.

Thus passed the hours, as swift the horses sped;
And when the lengthened shadows brought relief
To joyous earth, the city gates were nigh.
But ere the wearied horses entered in,
From out the portals issued forth the train
Of Pharaoh's Majesty, which quick approached
From this, while they from that direction came;
And with each other met without the gates,
Just where a furnace stood, where workmen, skilled
In Ægypt's art, their beauteous figures wrought.
And thus the monarch stayed their further course:

"O Prince, well hast thou done thy mission, brought
The Hebrews here. We gladly greet thy face;
And bid thee now relate whate'er befell
Thee in the way from this to Goshen's land."
Then spake the chief, "Behold! may Pharaoh hear!
When yesterday I for my mission left
Thy presence, lo, my pitying eyes beheld
The country far and near. Methought, at dawn,
A spirit hostile to our realm had rushed
From Typhon's hands, and wantonly had slain
The beasts, while they were grazing in the fields.
Where'er I turned mine eyes I saw them dead,

Or dying, whilst great crowds around them stood.
Ah! horror-struck, Osiris' servant saw
The sacred bull, there smitten, lying dead.
At length, I came to Goshen; there no trace
Appeared of such a spirit; there I saw
The healthy cattle grazing with the sheep,
Whilst some few boys attended unto them;
And joy, instead of grief, the men displayed.
Yea, more! The heavens were dark o'er Ægypt; there
They smiled in mercy; bade fair Peace, 'Go forth,
Thine influence shed abroad.' And as at morn
Methought, I quitted wroth, it seemed, at even,
As if I left behind me sweetest love.
E'en yet, O Pharaoh! suffer still my tongue
To tell thee truth. Behold! in Goshen's land
There was no sign of frogs, or lice, or swarms,
As we have seen them, messengers of woe.
O thou! sole ruler of Ægyptian clime!
The truth of that I saw I have revealed."

The chieftain ended, Sethos thoughtful stood.
Then Aaron made obeisance low, and said:
"O Pharaoh! Priest, and King of Ægypt's realm!
Most mighty Prince! Thy servants pray thee hear,

And graciously regard their offered speech.
Thou hast now heard from other lips than ours,
Of that great severance which the Lord hath put
'Twixt Ægypt's sons, and those of Israël.
Dread sire! we Hebrews are despised, yet still
Doth Truth embolden speech. She witnesseth
That Hope desires to humbly counsel thee,
When here I speak. I would befriend thy power!
Grant that submission to my God would bring
Thee some short weakness; yet, O sovereign Prince!
Hast thou not seen, that Nature's powers yield
Obedience unto Him, the Hebrews' God?
At His dread word, the waters turned to blood.
He bade the frogs come forth, the lice, the swarms;
He sent His Angel; lo, the cattle died,
Praised Him in death, as the All-Powerful.
Why shouldst thou fear? Could not He soon restore
The strength which our departing tribes would take,
Or seem to take, from thee? Could not He bid
All nations fear thy power? or wrathful send
Their conquering armies to destroy thy realm?
Thou see'st 'tis so. Whence would thy weakness come,
If He, the' All-Powerful, befriended thee?
Is not our captive race a fruitful source

Of present weakness, trouble, and dismay
To Ægypt's throne? Why then shouldst thou prolong
This state? Would not our very absence give
More freedom to thy sword? And for the rest,
Our God would with His blessing fill the land."

He ended speech. Then Sethos thus replied:
"Forsooth, thy words sound well. Yet now regard
The counsel fixed, determined in our mind.
We sent for you, Moses and Aaron, here,
Intending in our thoughts to grant that leave
So oft desired; but now we grant it not.
For though no beast of Israël is dead,
And Goshen's land hath peace, we brook not yet
Obedience unto aught but Ægypt's gods,
And our own royal will. Begone ye now!
Return ye hence unto your scornèd race,
Which shall remain enslaved, my workmen yet."

E'en while proud Sethos spake, God's holy voice
In whispers bade; and Moses forthwith stooped,
And gathered of the ash there spread about
By daily workmen; this he handfuls cast
By handfuls tow'rds the heavens, and faithful, said:

ıus saith the Lord, ' The ash which now I cast
ıeaven, shall be small dust throughout thy realm,
break in boils and blains on man and beast.' "
dread announcement heard, Sethos forbade
further speech, and tow'rds his palace went.

k was the night, as on the waters waste
at burning heaps of bygone harvests glared;
l fiercely blew the north wind's wintry blasts,
h its cold chills, upon the sleeping herds
spared; and on each blast was thickly borne
e ash, through the high lands of water free.
ıs in the morning, when the herdsmen woke,
ıy heard loud bellowings, and, all anxious, ran
ıo their beasts, which terrified, they see
lying in the folds, their necks outstretched,
ıir eyeballs dully fixed. Some seek to rise;
; fall forthwith, unable to endure
ı bitter nerve-pain coursing in their blood.

ıs came the ash-boil, burning cup of woe.
ıt on the beasts, but soon the herdsmen feel
power, as numbness steals o'er their strong frames.
ıy backward start, dismayed lest they perchance

Have breathed Contagion's breath. The herds are left
Uncared for but by few; more hasten home;
But there, the mother to the father weeps,—
Yea, there, the little child its murmurs pleads.
And in the royal court is heard the voice
Of one, who cries, "Silence! O nobles! chiefs!
We pray thee know that Pharaoh's health is ill!
No court takes place this day! Your leave receive!"

That cup of bitter woe, intenser wrath,
Was in its fury felt by suffering Man,
As when a scorpion's venom makes him cry
Aloud, tormented as he, restless, lies,
No posture painless, agonised in all.
Yet Pity, ere too many days had passed,
Bade Moses hope that Sethos would forego
His pride, as felt he there the hand of God.
Soon sought he audience; but proud Sethos sent
Short message of refusal, bade him leave,
Nor venture aught request for Israël.
Although the Magi's mystic art had failed
Before that cup, sixth vial of God's wrath,
Which they had drunk; and could no longer stand
Before God's servant, whom they once had mocked

With deed of blackness, art mysterious,
When first he unto Pharaoh said: "Thus saith
The Lord our God, 'Let thou My people go;'"
And though, since then, the monarch-priest had felt
That Nature's smaller things, Heaven bidden, wrought
On Man dire trouble, bitter pain, and woe,—
Yea, even then had laid him helpless down
With sore disease, in fierce punition sent;
Ah! though one word of justice could disperse
The anger-cloud, he proudly chose to dare
Intenser woe, despite of Mercy's voice,
Forewarning him, ere Heaven's last strokes should fall,
And quench his pride, his hope, his life itself.

BOOK IV.

TIME — ISRAEL'S GATHERING — PHARAOH'S FEAST — SEVENTH PLAGUE—ITS EFFECT—EIGHTH PLAGUE DENOUNCED—COUNSELLORS—EIGHTH PLAGUE—ITS DEPARTURE—COUNSELLORS—REFUSAL—MOSES CALLS ON GOD—INSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER—PRAYER OF MOSES—DARKNESS—ÆGYPT—PHARAOH AND MOSES—FINAL REFUSAL—FIRST-BORN THREATENED.

Long months have passed, and Ægypt's year
Hath nighly three parts run its woeful course;
Also the mighty river hath withdrawn
Its giant strength, and flows with humbler tide;
And o'er the plains, where the young corn doth grow,
Already tinged with harvest's golden hue,
Hath Israel with thousand legions trode;
As his twelve tribes, in marshal order closed
Round the great cities, once of Ramses built
To overawe their multitudes, and hold
In his strong grasp the hand of Goshen, prized
As Ægypt's garden, pearl of Ægypt's wealth.
No longer Terror from those cities flies

O'er their surrounding plains ; he holds his court
Within their walls, where Misraim falls down
Before the Hebrew, yields him homage, fears
Displeasure of his former house-born slave ;
Who now, expectant of departure, waits
Jehovah's message, freedom's joyous call.

For such long interval had Heaven kept back
The anger-cloud, restrained the stream of woe
Poured forth, its breaches healed, and given to Man
Some breathing-time to live, prepare the fields
To yield his daily portion ; thus bestowed
On Sethos Mercy's hour ; yet to avert,
By his submission, ruin, woe, and death.
Alas ! those precious days were lost, a gift
To Pride, to Passion, Revelry, and Pleasure.
No counsel had he sought ; yet oft had heard
The voice of Justice pleading, as she cried
By mouth of noble, priest, or counsellor,
Whose sight had seen far more than he beheld
Of Ægypt's woe ; who knew Israël's strength ;
His armies' march, the terror they inspired,
Which bound each hand, and made their lords their
slaves,

Devoid of counsel, fearful to oppose.
But he, proud monarch, still denied her voice,
Still weighed his power 'gainst the All-Powerful.

Thus 'twas, reclining on a sumptuous couch,
With tables placed before him, where were set
Rich golden vessels, full of Ægypt's fruits,
And flagons full of wine, dread Sethos sate
One morn; whilst nigh two hundred princes, chiefs,
And nobles feasted, drank him health and life;
Extolled his power, all but the wiser few.
But whilst they feasted, lo, the doors revolved,
The' emblazoned curtains rolled aside, as stood
God's prophet there, one moment gazed o'er all,
Then 'midst great silence unto Pharaoh went,
And thus his mission told: "O Sethos! King
Of Ægypt! wilt thou hear Israël's cry?
Have these long days of mercy yet inclined
Thine heart to Justice? Wilt thou grant the leave
We have desired, once more petition thee?"
So far he spake, and in the darkening brow
His answer read, and thus continued speech:
"Let Pharaoh hear! or else, thus saith the Lord:
'I will send all my plagues upon thine heart,

Thy servants, subjects, on thy wealth and theirs,
That thou may'st know that I am God alone.
In very truth, I have upraisèd thee
To manifest My power, declare My name
Through all the world; for shouldst thou still retain
My people, lo, to-morrow brings on thee
A grievous hail, more fierce, more terrible
Than Ægypt ere hath seen. Send therefore now,
And gather in thy beasts. For all that stays
Unsheltered in the fields, as then shall come
This hail on man and beast, shall surely die.' "

He ceased; nor other warning given, left,
As entered he the palace, unopposed.
His words found echo only in the hearts
Of those, God's secret servants, who now feared
His power; these saved themselves, their beasts, their
wealth.
Also the noble, once to Goshen sent
To call the brothers, gave them kindness now.
He bade them home, and they with him abode.

At even, bidden of the still small voice,
As he with Aaron walked outside the gates,

Where Ægypt's nobles sought the cool night air,
Moses upraised his rod, and called on Heaven
To hear. As when on Carmel's sacred mount
The Tishbite prayed, so then a cloud appeared,
Small as a hand, but black, intensely dark,
Darker than night, through whose long hours it spread
A veil of mourning, waiting for the dawn;
Or Terror's garment, Woe's embrace for all
'Neath its sad canopy. Swift fled the herds!
The herdsmen fled! But hark! loud thunder rolled.
One crash! The heavens were rent! The earth was grasped,
And quivered in its fear! Huge hail-rocks fell
On man, and beast, and field; ay, o'er the ground
The fiery lightning ran, responsive flashed!
So rent the dead! those in one moment slain
By that fierce vengeful storm, which Ægypt whelmed
In wrath, and round God's peaceful Goshen whirled
With fearful gusts of fitful howling wind,
Which brake the trees, and cast them prostrate down
Unto the herbs which at their feet had grown;
Then with next blast once more upraised, and strewed
Their fragments far and near. Then Sethos feared!
Then quailed his heart! Then paled his else firm face!

He saw all Nature stirred. Thus knew his God,
And to the chieftain sent; bade Moses come
With Aaron to his face, and trembling said,
"O Hebrews! I have sinned! The Lord is just!
I and my people, we are wicked proved!
It is enough! My spirit trembleth now!
Do ye entreat the Lord to graciously
Remove this His dread thundering and hail.
For I will let you go! Ye shall not stay!"
Moses replied, "O Pharaoh! I will spread
My hands before the Lord in prayer for you,
That thou may'st know He is sole Lord on earth.
But as for thee, and these, thy counsellors,
I know ye will not fear the Lord your God."

He said, and soon with open hands thus prayed
Without the city gates: "O Lord our God!
All-Mighty, Who hast spread, upholdest still
The heavens, the earth, look down compassionate.
Oh, hear entreaty! As Thou hast revealed
Thy power, make manifest Thy mercy; show,
By earth's obedience now, that Thou dost reign
Alone! Creator! Ever-present God!
O gracious Lord! all justly hast Thou loosed

The hail-stones of Thy wrath. Oh, cause Thine hail,
Thy thunderings to cease! that all may know
That Thou art merciful, nor dost afflict
With willingness the works Thine hand hath made."

He prayed. The lightning ceased, the thunder spake
With softer roll, the hail with lesser flood.
But when the Ægyptians, venturesome, came forth,
They saw a scene of devastation great
As when the' affrightened earth hath moved, hath tossed
A mountain headlong, cast its débris o'er
Vast fertile plains, extending tow'rds the sea.
They at the sight distracted, mourned, and wept.
But Sethos sinned; cased o'er his hardening heart
With flint, and with his courtiers resolved
To retain Israël. This he declared
When Moses sought fulfilment of his oath.
Yet Mercy now withheld immediate wrath;
Perchance the voice of wisdom would be heard,
As Ægypt's wiser princes spake for her.
Thus in that clime, earth's ancient granary,
Where harvest comes, not once, nor twice, but oft
In the long year, the trees had bloomed afresh,
The land was cleaned, the wheaten grain had grown,

Ere she veiled o'er her face ; and weeping bade
Dread Wrath, " Go forth, thine embassage fulfil."

As erst at dawn, Moses had oft forewarned
Proud Sethos of impendent woe, behold,
Again the brothers, not unbidden, stood
Before him, fearless told how Wrath discerned
His pride, claimed his submission, bade him let
God's people go ; or else the morn should bring
The locust flocks innumerable, thick clouds
Unheard of, covering earth, and sparing not
The residue spared by destroying hail.

Such message given, they straightway left his face.
But now the wiser chiefs could not withhold
Their counsel, which proud Sethos saw, and bade
Them speak. Then spake the friend of Israël:
" Dread Pharaoh ! priest ! child of Ægyptian gods !
Oft hast thou honoured me, and sought advice.
Ne'er have I given unfaithful counsel yet.
But now how shall I speak ? My lord must hear
That Ægypt's wealth is past and gone ; her power
Destroyed by these dread plagues, which thus have
swept

In fury by, obedient to this God
Whom we have angered. Hence we pray thee let
His servants go, and serve Him as He bade."

Then Sethos said, "Lest these thy words be true,
Send now. Bring back the men who so late said,
'Thus saith the Lord,' yet tarried not response."
Forthwith one ran, and overtaking, brought
The brothers back, when Pharaoh asked them thus:
"Behold! if now we let you go to serve
Your God, whom will ye take to worship Him?"
Moses replied, "Let Pharaoh Sethos hear.
Israël holds a feast unto the Lord;
Hence must we go, with agèd and with young,
With daughters and with sons, with flocks and herds."
Him Pharaoh heard, and with fierce anger said,
"The Lord be so with you, as I shall let
You go; also your little ones! Take heed
Lest Evil speaks, 'Not so.' Go now, ye men,
And serve the Lord! for that ye did desire.
Come hither, slaves! Drive these forth from our face!"

At once Moses and Aaron turned away
In wondering pity. But the house-born slaves,

Fearful of Pharaoh, trembling followed on
Them slowly leaving, walking through the court.
The palace gates were reached; but there they stood,
The feared and fearful, whilst God's prophet prayed
Aloud before them, stretched tow'rds Heaven his rod;
Which thus outstretched, there rose a fierce east wind,
Arabia's desert blast. All through that day
And the long night it blew, increased in strength.
And lo, at morning, on its tempest-wings,
Devouring locusts came in countless flocks;
Black as the darkness, deep as thunder-cloud
Doth seem. They lit full swiftly on the crops,
There springing forth afresh. They hid the earth
Beneath them, swarmed on all the trees, spared not
One blade of grass, green herb, or shooting leaf.
'Fore them young harvest smiled; there Nature wept
Her desolation, misery, and grief.

Proud Sethos saw, and felt the anger-dart
Pierce through his breast. He, terror-stricken, cried
For Amram's sons. Ere long they came. He pled
For mercy, sought forgiveness, prayed their aid
In language thus: "O Hebrews! I have sinned.
Behold, I've sinned against the Lord and you!

Forgive my sin, I pray ye, yet this once !
Oh, pray for me ! Entreat the Lord your God !
If only He will take away this death."
Then Aaron said, " Let Pharaoh hear my voice.
We would forewarn our lord. We too entreat,
Not for our nation's sake, but for thine own,
Thy people's good. Do not again refill
God's cup of wrath by slighting Mercy's prayer,
Which she will urge for thee and for thy realm,
That this, God's army, vast, innumerable,
May leave thee. For 'tis thy refusal brings
These woes, increaseth woe. Behold, we go.
And when our God hath called His hosts away,
We will return, and claim our people's right."
He ended speech. Then, honoured there, they left
The presence chamber, and Moses fell down
Before the Lord. For Pharaoh Sethos prayed.
God heard his prayer. He bade His west wind, " Blow
Thou mightily ! Seize thou the locusts ! Cast
Their countless armies on the deep Red Sea ! "
Then blew the wind ; and lo ! the morning found
Them gone. Not one in Ægypt's coast remained.

When Sethos saw God's army gone away,

And knew the wasted ruin left, he called
Not first for Moses, but he called the chiefs,
His counsellors, of whom the agèd spake,
Counselled submission unto God. Not so
The youthful, whom he had advanced, his friends.
These said, "Doth Pharaoh surely know our hope
Of harvest is destroyed? One hope remains;
Let not these men depart! But let them stay,
And sow the fields yet once again with corn."
With such-like counsel pleased, proud Sethos deemed
Delay's excuse was found; and bade them bring
Moses before his face, and prayed him thus:
"O Moses, truly hath thy God removed
The locust from our realm. But see ye now
In what sad strait I am. How can I let
Your people go? Wilt thou not let them stay
Short while, and do light favour for the years
Of sojourn? help my ruined people sow
Once more the fields, and give us food to eat?
Then will I let you go. Ye must do this!
Entreat the Lord thus far for me! Go now,
For I will let you go!" So far he said,
Nor answer sought, but waved his hand,
In sign of order given, and left the court.

Some days thus passed, while Ægypt craved the help,
In her great need, of Israël, who gave,
Or withheld aid, as former kindness pled.
But Moses knew Pharaoh's unspoken hope;
Read not his mission there. He often sought
The presence. Lo, one morn he boldly spake
For justice, claimed freedom for Israël,
And was refused. All trembling was the voice,
Blanched were the cheeks of Sethos speaking then
His definite resolve, dissembled not;
And those, his chiefs, who nighly stood, grew pale.
They could not speak. Strange terror held their voice;
Yea, Aaron's tongue spake not. But Moses broke
The awful silence: thus reproved the king:
"O Pharaoh Sethos! why dost thou oppose
Thy Lord Creator's will? I know thy mind
Will ne'er accord with His! O that it would!
A 'darkness of great horror' o'er me comes,
Whene'er tow'rds thee I look. I may not hope
That thou wilt ever yield, and freedom give
To us, who by thy father's conquering sword
In battle ne'er were won; but came to dwell
As Ægypt's guests, and sojourned in the land.
Why lov'st thou Enmity, and hatest Love?

Wilt thou not give? For us one hope remains;
Our God will give freedom, withheld by thee."

Such warning o'er, Moses and Aaron left
His face, nor tarrying then in city walls,
They went to Goshen, where they found the chiefs
Of Israël in council met. To whom,
Due greeting o'er, Moses these tidings gave:
"O Elders! Princes of my nation loved
By God! long have I left you, aiding thus
The more your heart's desire in Pharaoh's court,
If there aught word of man hath power to aid
Your cause, which is of God, and who alone
Hath power to work the furtherance of His will.
Behold, His arm hath smitten Pharaoh's strength!
His hail brought fear! His locusts made him cry
Submissive, abject plead for Mercy's hand
To stay the Angel, Death! He gave faint hope
That his concession might hold back the wing
Of that most awful spirit. But Mercy's voice
Hath pled with him in vain. He sees his fields
Once more prepared for corn, his dread far off,
And hath again refilled his cup of woe.
Nor may I now for justice intercede

On your behalf. Therefore, O Elders, Chiefs!
'Tis meet we all beseech the Lord our God,
At evening prayer, to take our freedom's cause
More closely still into His hand of power;
Yea, by His own great terror give to us
The freedom which proud Pharaoh will not give.
Behold, to you, O chiefs! to Israël
Likewise, the Lord hath this injunction sent:
'O Israël! I bid each household choose,
Or with a neighbour's house conjoined, select
Upon this month's tenth day a lamb or kid
Unblemished—yea, a first year's male—and keep
It up until the fourteenth day shall come,
When ye shall kill, and eat with holy rite,
Each one in haste, the Passover of God.'"

As Moses spake, a holy peace came o'er
The listening chiefs, as if his last words bound
With olive wreath an answer to his prayer.
And lo! the sun's vast disc was sending rays
Of reddened beauty upwards o'er the vault
Of Heaven; and that great council knelt as prayed
God's prophet thus: "O God of Israël!
Eternal Lord! faithful in covenant!

We praise Thee for Thy works, and Mercy's hand
Vouchsafed to us Thy servants, held in chains.
Oft have we gone, when Thou, our fathers' God,
Didst send us unto Pharaoh, Ægypt's king,
And in the court, before his warriors, chiefs,
Have spoken in Thy name, denounced Thy wrath.
But Pharaoh, dread of Israël, hears not
Our words, sees not Thy power, except when pours
The flood of anger down. O Lord our God!
All-Powerful! regard our prayer! Oh, take
Thy servants' cause into Thine hand! Thy charge!
Oh, let the darkness, veiling Thee, o'erspread
That heart of pride! that dwelling of the foe!
That he may feel Thy holy presence, Lord!"

Such was his prayer.
Next morn the sun arose
Enrobed in sadness, clouds beneath his feet—
Dread anger-clouds, which fled and gathered still
Not wonted storm! blackness mysterious!
Most dreadful darkness, blotting out the light
From Zoan, Sin, Aven, Tehaphnehes;
From Noph, from No, and where Syene stood.
Lo! in the fields the labourer ceased his toil,

As his weak, powerless hands let fall to earth
The worker of his work. Ah! 'neath that veil
Lay man and beast, like statues, still as stone
By artist carved; figures of death, not life.
There Gloom, adorned with Terror's chaplet, drove
Despondent Joy from Pharaoh's festive court,
And led in Silence, clothed with darkness, girt
With power more powerful than shadowed night,
Enthroned her there, where Pleasure erst was throned;
Ay, in the presence-hall where Sethos sate,
Conscious of life, and what that life had seen,
Had wrought; and opportunity of good
Unused—yea, unto evil turned; and thoughts
Of justice, where injustice had usurped
The throne. There Zoan's princes sate; likewise
The priests of On; also the mighty men,
The chiefs, the nobles, Magi, warrior-kings;
Each fearful lest an outstretched hand should speak
Him waiting in the City of the Dead,
Expectant of Osiris, dreaded judge,
And the eternal scales, where poisèd Truth
Apportioned bliss or everlasting woe.

The spotless ox before his slayer stood,

Who with one priestly hand had grasped the horn,
And backwards dragged the thought-for victim's neck;
Yea, in the other had uplift the blade,
With one sure stroke to pour the life-blood forth;
When o'er them there Ægyptian darkness fell,
And stayed the blow, and nerved them there to stand
Immovable. The chariot-maker, toiling hard,
Had nighly worked the metal for its place,
And sought the furnace-glow, therein to heat
It gone too cold; but in that moment dropped
The ponderous hammer from his nerveless hand,
His knees lost all their power, and terror-struck
He grasped the anvil, saw a darkness fall
Around him, from whose shade the flame retired,
Too weak to pierce the blackness of the gloom,
Which hid the whitened glare of metal; bid
The beams thereof, rejected, shine no more;
And did eclipse, for three full days and nights,
The glory of the sun, the moon, the stars,
Ægyptian gods, o'er Ægypt, Pharaoh's realm,
Yet not o'er Israël, Jehovah's love.

But such long days fulfilled, the morning rose
In wonted light, and Ægypt's princes saw—

Ay, all her 'minished multitudes beheld—
Each other wan, as if Death's wing had scarce
Fled over them in his dread flight of woe.
And with the morn Moses and Aaron drew,
On bidden journey, near the city walls.
Ere long they met one running swiftly, sent
By Pharaoh to implore forgiveness, beg
Their presence, since he dared no longer keep
God's people, but would surely let them go.
Alas! short-lived concession to the Will
Unchangeable, Eternal of the Truth,
All-powerful, O'erruling, Merciful:
Ere Sethos saw God's prophet, he had cast
Off true submission; yet the darkness hung
O'er his proud heart in shadow: hence he dared
Not with complete refusal speak; but said,
"O Moses! I have sinned. Yet go ye now,
And serve the Lord your God, with Israël.
Only let these, your flocks, your herds, be stayed.
Take ye your little ones. Thus may I hope
For your return, to sojourn in my land."

Acceding not, Moses replied: "Such leave,
O Pharaoh Sethos, we may not regard:

We hold a sacrifice; hence must we take
Our flocks. Thou may'st not stay one hoof thereof.
We know not now, nor, till we thither reach,
Shall learn the offerings enjoined of God."
Sethos brooked not these words; impatient cried:
"What meanest thou? Your tribes may go! Not so
Your herds! I, Pharaoh, claim your pledged return."
Then Moses said: "Let Pharaoh yield him now;
Submissive to the Lord; regard my words
With favour, not with wrath. The Lord our God
No longer doth desire that Israël,
His chosen, well beloved, should e'er return
To sojourn here, or dwell in Ægypt's land.
He hath adopted us, His First-born Son;
And would bestow inheritance on us.
O Sethos! as thou dost regard thy son,
Who on this throne should sit, no hindrance make;
But let thy servants leave in friendship now,
That thus, hereafter, mutual bonds may keep
Our neighbouring nations, drive from each its foes."

Such gentle speech enraged proud Sethos more
Than anger-words. He wrathful cried: "Moses,
Get hence! Begone! Take heed unto thyself!

Dare not to seek my face! For surely know,
That when thou see'st me, thou shalt see death!"
'Twas then that in that trial-time the flush
Of anger first on Moses' face was seen,
As lacking not prophetic power, he said:
"Thy words are good; I'll see thy face no more.
For Mercy doth no longer intercede
For thee. But in thy hand is placed the cup,
The last sad cup of the Eternal's wrath.
Thus saith the Lord: 'I will go forth
At midnight through the land, e'en through its midst,
And all the first-born of the land shall die.
The first-born son of Pharaoh on his throne;
The first-born of the maid behind his mill;
The first-born of the beasts; these all shall die.'
Then shall a cry, a great and bitter cry, arise
In Ægypt's realm; none hath been like it yet;
Nor shall again its bitter voice be heard.
But 'gainst Israël's sons, or 'gainst their beasts,
No dog shall move his tongue, that thou may'st know
The Lord hath severed Israël and thee;
Yea, these, thy servants, shall bow down to me,

And pray, ‘ O Moses ! go thou hence ! Do not delay !
But all thy followers take ! Oh, haste thee hence ! ’
At their entreaty I will go. Not else.
I go ! Think not to see my face again ;
Nor think that light will on thy darkness break.”

BOOK V.

ISRAEL'S CAMP—JOSHUA APPOINTED CAPTAIN—ISRAEL ACCEDES THERETO—PASS-OVER SLAIN—DEATH OF FIRST-BORN—DEPARTURE OF ISRAEL.

WHILST o'er the foe the veil of darkness lay,
Vast armies moved on Ramses' wallèd town
As Israël, with flocks and many herds,
Around it gathered, waiting but the word
Of Heaven for their departure homeward thence.
Ay, there he pitched his camp, there chose him leaders,
Ordered all his tribes, for the glad march
Of Freedom, where the priests of On, those lords
Of a false faith, in their great temple halls,
Might hear and know Jehovah's truth proclaimed.

We tell one scene of many there that passed.
Behold, as 'fore him sate on either side
The elders, princes, chiefs, and leaders, placed
According to the age of Jacob's sons,

Moses addressed the assembled council, thus:
"O ye assembled rulers, swift hath sped
The sun, completing now his yearly course, since first
Ye sought to know the numbers in your tribes,
So to insure Freedom's un'minished roll.
Around us here your armies lie encamped,
Their households, and their flocks, whose numbered strength
For battle gives six hundred thousand men.
O'er these due captains rule; but over all,
Chief Captain of the Host, doth Joshua hold
The authority of power, which one must sway;
Else are ye not an army, but a crowd
Tumultuous, your foes' most easy prey.
'Tis thus ye are prepared to hear the voice
Of Freedom bidding you 'Arise! Unloose!'
Ay, break ye now your slavery's bitter chains!
Begin your ordered march; and journey ye
From Ægypt's toil to Canaan's promised rest!
But so, that not without triumphant sign
Of gladness and rejoicing, ye may leave
This land, wherein your fathers came to dwell
As Pharaoh's guests, the Lord doth say, 'Ask ye
From Ægypt gold, and silver, precious things,

Embroidered robes, as parting gifts. Wait not!
For, as a lion bursting through his bonds,
Full soon shall ye your enemies disperse.'
O Chiefs! draw up, each day, in ranks of five,
Those trusted to your care, and name by name,
E'en from the hoary head unto the child
Which in its mother's fondling arms is borne,
Call o'er the muster-roll of Israël.
This done, unto your several households tell
Whate'er ye have in council heard from me,
Or have yourselves resolved that day to do."

He stayed his words; then faithful Joshua thus:
"O Israël! behold, our chief hath said
That Joshua is Captain of the Host.
I will essay this honoured rank to bear,
And unto victory our forces lead
Whene'er a foe shall stand 'fore Canaan's land.
And to mine own especial charge I take,
For safety sake, the Hope of Israël.
In serving him, in listening to his voice,
I all my joy will know, shall wisdom get,
And meetly fill the post he hath bestowed."
He ceased. And ere the murmurs of applause,

Which from his hearers broke, were well subdued,
'Midst Judah's ranks, Jephunneh's son arose;
And thus, whilst all superior agreed
Unanimous, his own approval spake:

"O Chief! revered deliverer of our tribes!
Well hast thou chosen one o'er us to rule.
For strict unswerving faithfulness, for strength,
For bravery, and upright course of life,
His equal may be found; but who excels
The son of Nun therein? We therefore pay,
With greater joy, obedience unto him,
Whose steadfastness of will is known to all;
In whom all can their confidence repose;
None dread betrayal of the honoured charge
To which thou justly hast exalted him."

He ended speech. Then Korah next arose,
A Levite born; for subtlety renowned;
Who said: "Since thus the captains have declared,
Unanimous, approval of such choice,
It well behoveth us to coincide
Therewith. For theirs it is to know their art,
Discern in whom that skill lies hid which leads

Great armies 'gainst the foe, and from him wins
The battle's long-contested victory.
Therefore, O Leader, Chosen of the Lord,
We too accord thee thanks. Remember you,
O Joshua, the oath thy mouth hath sworn
This day before our tribes. Forget it not!
But guard the safety of our Leader; strive,
As thou hast said, to fill thy captaincy
With honour to thyself and Israël."

He ceased; and then the agèd man arose,
Who willingly had unto Moses given
The place he had among the elders filled.
Nor, doing so, had in the heart retained
Aught envy, afterwards to bear its fruit
In rebel act, or vile dissension sown
In unsuspecting breasts, by counsel bad
For listening ears, but for the speaker worse.
He, otherwise, in calmest speech addressed
His hearers thus: "O brethren of my kin!
Who, short time flown, as captive slaves erst crouched
Beneath too heavy burdens placed on you,
'Tis well for us oft to compare those days
With present good, when those around us fear

The arm of Him, Whose servant leads us forth,
As He in ages long since passed foretold.
And when the hoped-for freedom shall be won,
Then must we oft recall the bitter yoke,
Which in our slavery we, fainting, bore.
For if in this our memory should fail,
Then shall we soon forget our gratitude
To Him, to those who have exposed their lives
That we with them in liberty may joy.
By your obedience, show ye these your love!
'Tis meet that I, who through mine age once ruled
Your multitudes, should now this counsel give,
While, unopposed, ye for dear freedom work,
Lest otherwise, when for your trial comes
The hour of seeming woe, your hearts should fail;
And ye should then forget the deeds of power
By which the Powerful now frees your tribes,
And thus bears witness, honouring him who claims,
In His great Name, obedience here this day,
Ere guided by his hand we leave this realm.
Such fealty, I, on my part, accord.
Nor I alone, but all your elders too;
For so we have agreed, and ne'er will break
The words which we, in front of all, this day

To Moses pledge. Receive, thou Chosen One!
The Lord's Redeemer! Hope of Israël!
The Elders' vow of true allegiance."

Then, whilst the hearers of such warning soft,
With weeping eyes and heads inclinèd low,
In heartfelt silence sate, Moses arose,
And thus his thanks in grateful language spake:
"O thou! whose years so far exceed mine own,
'Twas meet that I should render thee respect;
But now thou hast, by this free act of thine,
Suffused my heart with deepest gratitude,
And warm affection tow'rds thine elder age.
I seek that from the great experience
Which such long life hath to thy wisdom given,
Thou wilt with friendly counsel oft support
Me, overborne with care for Israël.
Be thou my father! Treat me as thy son!
Full soon may I your kindly friendship need;
For Ægypt hath already one day passed
In dreary darkness, blacker than the night,
Which twice hath come and gone unknown to those
Who, fearful, sit beneath the dusky gloom
In silence like the grave's. But when the light

Returning gives them life, once more I claim
Your liberty ; for He, the Merciful,
Would not outpour His final wrath on man.
And though it must be given, He, lingering, holds
The cup of Ægypt's anguish in His hand;
If that might be withheld. But Pride draws out
Her lips for that dread cup, and soon shall drink
Its bitter dregs of grief and direst woe.
But let us now this morning's council close;
And hopeful of the end, let all depart,
And heed the duties unto each assigned."
Then elders, princes, chiefs, and leaders went
Unto those booths, for which each after year
In sacred cycle held a feast of God;
That days of long prosperity might own
The humble lot which Israël had left.

O Powers of Darkness! Strive! Haste thou, O Light!
The morning breaks! The Fourteenth Day hath come!
The Day of Freedom! Day of Israël!
Glad day foretold, four hundred cycles past!
Whose hope had softened Slavery's bonds, had pierced
With hidden fear the cruel rulers' breasts,
So that the Sworn Eternal Truth to change,

And prove untrue, these last had vainly sought,
By persecution, toil, and dreadful death,
To slay the nation which still grew, increased
As blessed of God! The sea-borne sand their type.

That morn had Israël in council met,
The moment this, to learn the hour, the rites,
Wherein, wherewith to slay the parted lamb;
Whose day of sacrifice was come, and told
Each several heart another day was near.
Long time they sate as expectation held
Them anxious, bade them, whispering, speak of hope
Heart-stirring, moving them with power unfelt,
Unknown before. Lo! southwards one was seen
Approaching fast; all knew him, rose and stood,
As came Moses, their loved, their fearèd chief.
Flushed was his face; his eye shone forth too bright,
As if the Spirit's breath breathed o'er him still;
While told he them his joyous tidings thus:

"O Israël! the day so long foretold,
The day of your deliverance hath come.
Henceforth this month shall be your first of months.
Slay ye, this even, the chosen parted lamb!

Eat ye it roast with bitter herbs, and bread
Unleavened; with girded loins and sandalled feet,
Your staff in hand, eat ye it whole, this night
In haste. It is the Pass-over of God.
In things most small observe each holy rite;
But take ye heed. Smite ye the doorposts each
With blood, and pass not thence till morning breaks.
At midnight's hour the' Avenger issues forth
To slay the first-born, man and beast, and smite
The gods of Ægypt. Lo! He is the Lord!
The blood shall be a token where ye are.
For He hath said, that when He sees the blood,
He will pass-over you, and not destroy
You in the day He smites the land of Ægypt.
This day shall be observed by Israël,
For ever kept a feast unto the Lord.
And when your little ones shall come and say,
'What meaneth this?' ye shall to them reply,
'This is the Pass-over of God, who smote
The first-born sons of Ægypt in one night,
But over-passed the houses where we dwelt,
And brought our fathers from captivity.'
Take heed that all your members, watchful, wait
With staff in hand, all ready, swift to form

Their ordered ranks, and with God's fear begirt,
To leave this land of woe, while foes look down
In fear. For they, who have long time oppressed,
And made you slaves, oft bowed your necks in grief,
Shall come this night in crowds, beseeching you:
'O haste! Go ye! On your account we die!'
It is their hour of trembling, and the cup
Of anguish shall be filled for them to drink.
But when 'tis drank, and emptied to the dregs,
They may repent them of their fear, and seek
To bring you back. Therefore, O Chiefs, take heed
That all your charge be present when the roll,
From age to nursling child, this even is called."

As Moses spake, an awe, a calm suffused
All those who heard; and when he silent stood,
Each face was bent in worship to its God,
As if they then had learnt the wondrous truth,
That type of the still Greater Mystery
(In God's eternal counsels hidden there,
Though dimly seen through the long pendent veil
By prophets, priests, and thronèd royalty,
Ay, all who in humility desired
To reach, as contrite learners, its reward;

Till, in the revelation of Himself,
He said, "Behold, the Saviour of the world"),
They were a chosen nation, saved by blood,
To them vouchsafed, but to their foes denied,
And that the Lord was Captain of their host.

In silence each arose, and bent his way
'Midst Israël, to publish far and wide
The' injunctions which the Lord had told their Chief
That gladsome morn, that all might hear and do.
Some hours elapsed; and then in every booth
An anxious group of old and young is seen
Assembled; there to eat, with solemn rite,
The Lamb, the type of earth's great Pass-over.
But ere the bitter herbs, the roasted meat,
That bread unleavened is touched, behold,
The eldest dips a hyssop bunch in blood
Which from the slaughtered innocent had poured,
And with it smears the lintel and its posts,
Then with the circle round doth humbly pray
Unto the Lord, the Merciful, to' accept
Obedience to His Word. All eat thereof—
The mother holding in her arms her child
Too weak to walk; while 'gainst the father's breast

Is placed a pilgrim's staff, on which there hangs
His household goods. The sacrifice is o'er;
And Israël is purified to bear,
Unscathed, the Presence of the Holy One.
He issues forth, e'en from His secret place,
The' abode of light, which creatures darkness deem,
Not meet to look unharmed on Purity.
Forthwith from Ægypt's unpurged race there rose
One wail, from Pharaoh throned, to him who lay
A captive in his cell, "My son! my son!
My first-born! Art thou dead?" No answer came.
For with one parting cry the first-born died.
Then Pharaoh Sethos wept; too late his grief!
All agonised, he sent to Moses then;
All agonised, the wilful people ran
To Israël, and begged him, "Haste ye! Go!
Ere we, the living yet, ourselves shall die!
Oh, here are gifts! our parting gifts! of gold!
Of silver! jewels! silken raiment! cloth
Of purple! linen fair and white! Oh, take
Ye these! Take all! But part, our friends! Go ye!
Begin ye now, O Israël, your march!"

But while all Ægypt wept, her nobles, chiefs,

Her greatest princes, sent by Sethos, came
On royal embassy to Moses, begged,
As to a God, an interval in wrath;
And prayed him take the Heaven-protected tribes
Of Israël away, ere yet a death
More fierce, more terrible, should smite the land.
They, with subduèd breath and folded hands,
Awaited there the answer of his lips;
Whilst 'round them many of Pharaoh's servants stood,
All feeble, helpless, cast 'twixt hope and dread,
Ere Moses thus foreboding fear allayed:—

"Ye men of Ægypt! princes of the court!
From smitten Sethos sent; why cringe ye thus,
As if this work was mine? I am but man!
In it no part, no power do I possess,
Save that which, as the messenger of God,
I at His Word do say, or humbly wield.
But yet, O princes, would ye know His Fear?
Do ye desire the' Eternal Spirit's life?
Leave off the worship in your childhood learnt,
And in the creature know no more your God.
Yet know Him in His works; but render not
The Maker's Honour there. To Sethos say

That Moses saith: 'I go. Israël leaves
The thraldom of thy yoke; returneth not,
While either nation lives, to wear again
The chains of servitude to Ægypt's king.'"

Then from his face those unto others brave
Retired with hushed and scarcely beating hearts.
Yet so not all; for he, the warlike prince
Erst sent to Goshen, there had Moses met;
Now lingering paused, as if the warning stayed
His steps, urged him to leave the much-prized court
Of Pharaoh Sethos, all the homage paid
Unto his rank, his power, as Ægypt's crowds
Bowed low before his chariot, swiftly drawn
By mettled steeds, caparisoned for war,
Or harnessed in the golden harness kept
To vie with princes in the palace gate.

When Moses saw him halting ere he left,
Then sympathy awoke, divined the cause,
And thus with gentler language opened speech:
"O prince, who singly of thy people dared
To shelter us, the messengers, when all
Esteemed of thee yet feared the' impetuous wrath

Of Pharaoh Sethos, ruler of this realm,
Where late the ripening grain, the pastures, smiled
With coming harvest—fruit of industry,
Why dost thou tarry? What doth trouble thee?
Doth Pharaoh cause thee fear? or dost thou dread
That, grieving o'er our loss, he will recall
The counsellors who said, 'Let them depart,'
And will in vengeance order cruel death
For thee, whose true advice befriended us?
If so, then come with us; 'twill be thy good;
If not in earthly substance, yet in that
Which is above all wealth. For thou shalt learn,
More fully than thou know'st, or Ægypt knows,
Of secrets deeply hid in Nature's womb;
Yea, thou shalt learn to know the Holy One,
Almighty God, whose glory is unshared;
Who, though upholding all things, loves thee well,
And deems His priceless treasure Prayer's voice.
Yea, saith to thee: 'Oh, give Me now thine heart,
That I may bless thee through thy life's long days.'"

Then thus the prince, in kindly answer, said:
"Moses, thou hast my troublous thought discerned.
Full well I know, when Pharaoh's fear shall flee,

And surely it will flee when this his grief
Shall have its bitterness forgot, he will reflect,
And, sorrowful, to memory call the hosts,
Who, erst enslaved, his dread behests performed.
Then will this wisdom seem but Folly's breath.
And since you, absent, may no longer feel
Vindictive wrath, he will his vengeance pour,
As once his oath, on noble, priest, or chief,
Whom he, for friendliness unto your tribes,
With plea of justice might give o'er to death.
Thus was my thought disturbed, but your last words
Resolve my doubt, bid me with kindness close;
For how can I with naked feet now tread
The courts of Ptah or Ra, Ma or Tefnet?
Or how can I the dread of Typhon own,
When all their god-like power hath been denied,
Their life disproved by thee, who dost proclaim
That One alone, the Hebrews' God, is God?
Ah! I may no more stay with those who bow
Themselves in worship vain and profitless.
Moses! I'll go with you. Loved Ægpyt, hark!
Farewell! My childhood's land, farewell! farewell!"

Meanwhile the sons of faithful Abraham,

Through promised Isaac's line, the nations twelve
To wrestling Jacob born, heard Freedom's voice
Call o'er their numbers formed in ranks in five;
Then with the blushing morn, Earth heard their songs
Of gladness, hymns of praise, which up to Heaven
Angelic powers bore. There, joyous, sang:
"O come, ye millions, forth! Behold our joy!
Sing ye Jehovah now, triumphant King!
Almighty, faithful Lord! Eternal God!
O come ye now! Behold Israël's march;
He is henceforth from Ægypt's bondage freed."

Ay, gladly saw they there an emblem given,
That He who humbled On and Karnak's courts,
Those centres of the Earth's great wandering
From light and truth, would vanquish in due time
The powers of Darkness; Holiness reveal;
Though envious Hate had well-nigh shut her out
With massive bars, by mortal folly wrought;
Then placed when man first disobedience chose,
Since of his blindness welded in a rock
Immovable, save by the power of Him
Who shone forth glorious on Israël,
Unarmed 'midst armèd foes. Thus promise gave

That He for evermore would safely guide
His chosen people, suffer not their fall,
While they on Him, the Captain of their Life,
Should steadfast gaze. But on their enemies,
From out the frowning darkness, which begirt
The rear of Israël, would fiercely look
With angry glance, with lightning in His eye.

'Twas thus that Israël, on all sides kept
By Heavenly aid, in God-born armour clad,
Defiant of the great surrounding force,
So late his dread, his bond of slavery,
His march began, and Ægypt bade farewell.
Six hundred thousand is the number writ
Of those who, with their wives, their children, took,
With lowing herds and bleating flocks, the road
That from Rameses unto Succoth ran.

BOOK VI.

CAMP ON THE SEA-SHORE—WATCHER—ALARM—THE RED SEA—THE SPOIL—ELIM—QUAILS—MANNA—THE SMITTEN ROCK—AMALEK—JETHRO—EVENING HYMN.

SHUT in 'twixt mountains and the ocean wave
Of the Red Sea, 'camped on those burning shores,
Israël rests, as on their thousands shines
The columned light of Heaven, motionless.
But hark! what sound ariseth, falls, then sounds
With loud full cry of anguish o'er the host?
It is the watcher's voice. He cries, "They come!
The chariot comes! the horsemen, spearmen come!
Ay, Pharaoh's army pours! his standard waves!
His princes crowd down on my watchful eye!"

As when alone, benighted in a waste,
Or wilderness, a traveller hears the roar
Of savage beast there prowling for his prey,
And starts affright, so runs a tremor through

All Israël, as they repeat that cry ;
And Pharaoh's army, like inpouring water, seeks
Its compassed foe, deemed tangled 'midst the rocks.
And lo ! reproachful people weep ; bewail
The boon of freedom, scarce enjoyed ere lost ;
As they the freed considered, so preferred
Not to have known, than thus to lose, and die
Themselves unburied in the wilderness.
Such cry of sorrow Moses, grieving, heard
Them hopeless tell ; then for encouragement
Of faint heart, bade their weeping multitudes :
" Think ye what erst the' All-Powerful hath done
On your behalf. Fear not ! Stand still ! Behold
The Lord's salvation, which this day shall save
You fearful, these your enemies destroy ! "

So raised he hope ; and led them, wondering, on
Towards the sea ; where come, 'fore all he stretched
His sceptre rod, and said : " Thus saith the Lord,
' These waters shall divide, and ye shall go
On dry land through their midst. For I will get
Me honour upon Pharaoh and his host,
As he will follow you.' " Meanwhile, enrobed
In wreaths of pillared cloud, the Guardian moved

Straight o'er the host. He stood before the foe,
And with o'ershadowing darkness bade him stay;
But shone in glory on His people's feet.
Then rose the east wind, till in its desert breath
Breathed forth its fiercest gale upon the wave
Of the Red Sea, and drove its waters back
To either side, dried up its shelving bed,
A pathway for the nation loved, who passed
In safety through the midst of waters walled,
Which once proud Sethos thought had made them slaves,
His army's prey, his captured bondmen then.

But he, dread Spirit, who in after years
Bound Chenaanah's son, and Ahab slew,
Saw Sethos breast his dwelling-house, just swept,
And entering in, thence with great rage led down
That army 'twixt the sea-born sentinels,
God-ordered guardians of Israël.
Full down into the deep was Sethos led,
With all his pomp of war. One saw him there,
Beheld him enter whilst loud thunder spake
Forbearance, yet restrained the anger-flood,
Until destruction swift, of mercy void,

Might fall on those unbidden, who there trode
His threshold, sought His people's harm or death.
But in the morning watch, His eye looked forth
In anger, and He brake the chariot-wheels
Of them presumptuous, who too late perceived
Their folly, cried for swiftest flight; for God
Bade Moses, "Stretch thine hand forth o'er the sea."
Then the great deep bowed o'er its Maker's steps,
And with a dreadful roar in worship, whelmed
Beneath its waves the host of Pharaoh's pride,
Of which none fled, a messenger of woe.

But to the further side all safely come,
Israël saw the' engulfing waters bow,
Heard thence the cry of death, beheld the deep
Cast out its slain, and strew the coast with spoil
Of Ægypt's armour, there a gift of Heaven,
Prepared to meet their need. Then Faith awoke,
Arose, and joyous sang, as Moses taught,
Thanksgiving praise unto the Lord their God;
Triumphant now, henceforth Salvation, Strength;
Whose arm had piled the waters, formed a path
For them, but in descending waves had whelmed
Their foe, and would drive out the nations yet

Who held the hills and plains of Canaan's land.
And answering them, Israël's daughters sang
In sweet accord, as Miriam led their song:
"Sing to the Lord! He is triumphant now,
And glorious! The horse! the rider came!
He saw, and spake! the sea regained its strength!"

Long while their volumed voices rose from hill
And dale, but when resounding Echo spake
No more in grateful song, then Moses said:
"O Israël! now Heaven hath heard your praise,
And keeps its record; but the Lord hath sealed,
Amidst these waters, you unto Himself
In covenant of grace. If ye will pay
Him honour, He will dwell a Saviour, Lord,
Protector among you. See here His gifts,
The armour of your foes, await your hand
Upon this rocky shore. O Joshua! send
The captains forth, and gather in the spoil,
Ere through the wilderness we take our march."

Then Joshua bade, and shortly thousands went
Forth from each tribe, who brought Ægyptian spoil
Back to the camp, and therewith armed the youth

Of Israël, till that hour weaponless.
Scarce was this duty o'er, when lo, the cloud
Gave signal for their onward travelling
Through Shur, until at Marah's bitter stream
They, murmuring, spake to Moses of their thirst.
"What shall we drink?" Such was their sinful cry
Of little faith, which placed before the Lord,
Moses was shown a neighbouring tree whose leaves,
Containing virtue, made the waters sweet.
So were they proved. And Moses there renewed
God's covenant, the symbol's meaning told:
That Sorrow should before Obedience lose
Her bitterness; but pleasant things should yield
Their blessings up before Rebellion's face.

Next tow'rds the palms at watered Elim grown
The host advanced; whence issuing forth, they reached
The Wilderness of Sin, and hungering cried,
Forgetful of the Elder's voice which warned
Them, ere had yet been burst the bitter yoke
Of forced obedience, misery, and woe.
But grace was nigh, and Heaven, compassionate,
Looked on them angerless, as Moses said:
"At even ye shall know it was the Lord

Who brought you here. At morning ye shall see
His glory, for He hears these murmurings.
And who are we? Why murmur ye 'gainst us?
At eventide the Lord will give you flesh,
And in the morning bread! He heareth you!
Ye murmur not to us, but to the Lord!"
Scarce stayed he speech, when tow'rds the wilderness
Excessive glory shone forth from the cloud,
Descending nigh. Then God with Moses spake,
And all his words confirmed.

Soon rose the cloud,
And lo! at even sounds of burring wings
Were heard, as countless quails on breezes borne,
In flocks of their migration travelling
Came near, in sight as when a cloud o'erlaps
A mountain-top, and with black covert hides
That rugged scenery; so on they flew,
A waving mass, and wearied fell upon
That camp of hunger, covered it with food;
And gave it flesh. But as the pearl-like dew
At morning summons fled, behold, on earth
Angelic grain was seen, like hoar frost round,
A coriander seed in size, and white

As bdellium, tempting as the luscious juice
Which flowerets to their tiny searchers give.
'Twas callèd Manna, since it was not wist
Of those who thus demanded, "What is this?"
For each an omer fell, no lack, no waste.
For he who gathered much had none to spare,
And he who brought home less perceived no want.
For forty years a daily measure fell;
Five nights in portion due; the sixth twofold;
As from all time one day in seven was claimed
Of God, sacred to Him: a day of rest,
With silent finger pointing from His rest
Unto Earth's day, when He with man shall dwell.

Thus fed, Israël came to Rephidim,
But found no water there, and failing, asked
Of Moses, "Wherefore this? Thou leadest us
From Ægypt here! We die ourselves, our beasts,
Our children with this thirst! Give water now!"
Then Moses said, "Why chide ye so with me?
I, of myself, can nowhere lead your steps.
See ye yon pillared cloud? That leadeth you!
Your words reprove not me. Why tempt ye
God?

Should He recall the mercy unto which
He hath you hither led?"

So stayed he fear,
Awakened faith, which calmed them ere he prayed;
Nor prayed in vain. For from his knees uprisen,
He bade them, "Follow ye!" Then tow'rds a rock,
Whose bold and fissured cliff rose darkly up
Full many a cubit, barred a barren glen,
Led he the Elders. Lo! One stood thereon
Invisible, who heard His servant's voice:
"Thus saith the Lord: 'O rock! waters shall flow
From thee henceforth!'" and saw him faithful raise
His sceptre rod, and smite the hard dry rock.
Then straightway rent it; bade its caverns, "Pour
Your bosomed waters forth!" At once there flowed
A rushing streamlet down, meet for the thirst
Of sinful, weeping Israël—a type
Of that love-look whose power alone can break
Man's flint-like heart, harder than hardest rock,
Find in it streams of love, and health, and life.

But soon a fiercer foe, e'en man, more dread
Than changeless Nature, came to terrify,

Assail their courage. Amalek, proud tribe,
Of stature huge, in warfare bold, opposed
Their further march; whom seen, some fearing doubt
Sprang up in many breasts, which Moses sought
Thus to allay. He first to Joshua said:
"O Joshua! now with hasty message call
The chiefs and captains, brave or fearful here,
To warlike counsel, ere delay shall add
Despondent terror to the fear which sways
The yet untried strength thou dost command."
Then Joshua bade attendants, "Go! convey
To all the chiefs of thousand chiefs this word:
'Come now! form ye a council on the war!
Lo, Moses waits! lo, Joshua waits advice!'".

Meanwhile, Moses to Aaron said, "Brother,
See, now, how soon forgetfulness despoils,
How soon a reed of unbelief deflects
The beam of light, else keeping man with God!
We, too, like Israël, are frail, and need
His gift of grace on holy thoughts bestowed."
Then Aaron, "It behoveth weakness thus
From others' faults to learn the dread of self,
And trust in God. I know He answers prayer.

Yet say, if meditation doth not join
With holy deed, will He His aid bestow?
He claims the heart unshared, unoccupied!"
"Yea, brother," Moses said, "for holy act,
Aspiring unto merit, falls defiled,
Unholiness becomes. The highest deed,
Most righteous, gives but proof of faith and love,
Obedient to your God, and Meekness wears
No robe of merit; with submission sees,
In all she does, what she hath left undone.
Hence the command to serve the Lord thy God
In deed, in faith, in hope, and mercy, seek
For failures known, unto thy spirit's grief."

Here Joshua interposed: "Master beloved!
Thy bidding I have done, and here have stood,
Whilst thou with Aaron joining speech hast talked,
Refreshed my spirit, as when oft the dew,
At even falling, takes from sunburnt grass
The hardening of the day. But ah! what sounds?
I hear the captains gathering to thy word!"

Scarce had he said, when forth from every side
The captains came; to whom, in council set,

Moses emboldening speech began: "O Chiefs
In Israël! hath fear so soon effaced,
As hath been said, from any in your charge,
That graven seal of the All-Powerful,
His vengeance o'er that army which pursued
With ordered true array, triumphant shouts,
You deemed a fugitive, scarce fled, unarmed,
Not to be saved from those inured to war
And battle, 'customed unto victory?
Did not their terror fill your tribes at even?
Did not the morning show their army slain?
Where, then, is Terror's chamber still? Such fear
Dishonours God, who laid their valour low!
Who now doth keep, and with His Presence leads
Israël through these lands, before unknown!
O Chiefs! Encourage ye the fearful! Seek
Of Joshua counsel, and your plans devise!
Let Judah hold the right of Israël
With twenty thousand youth, armed for the war.
Let Reuben, joining strength with Simeon, give
An equal force, all chosen, brave in heart,
To win them honour in the centre placed.
Let Isaachar the' extremest left defend;
While Benjamin, o'ershadowed by the night,

Must place ten thousand valiant youth concealed
Among yon craggy heights, till he shall see
Fierce Amalek with Israël engaged
In mortal combat, pressed on either flank;
Then like a loosened rock, his ambush break,
'Midst shouts as of a vanguard of a force.
Let Joseph's children stand a strong reserve
Of forty thousand, so to aid their brethren.
Let Dan, and Naphtali conjoinèd, form
With Gad, and Ashur, Zebulon, a guard
To overlook the safety of the camp,
And foil the foe, should he, in wiles well taught,
Attempt such stratagem. Depart, O Chiefs!
Proclaim these cheering words: 'The Lord our God,
Who rules the battle's wave, will fight for us!'
He will our wants supply! We need not arms,
Nor skill to send swift arrows from the bow!
For those, His foes, though numerous, want all things.
Their wisdom turns to folly! Woman's fears
Reign in the breasts, where else brave hearts had
reigned!"

Nor only thus did Moses' faith make bold
The drooping soul of Israël, beloved

Of Heaven. All night he went down through the tribes,
That each might stand in the swift-gathering strife,
When it should rage, as boil two mountain floods
Whose torrents strive to 'whelm each other's flow,
And thenceforth guide their turbid, headlong course,
Till both are met, engulfed by mightier wave.
With Joshua, too, he of the morrow spake,
Discerning this attack or that bold feint
Of Amalek, and his sad forlorn hope,
Last weak attempt, as Israël's reserve,
Fresh in its vigour, should be sudden thrown
Upon his wearied line, not conquered yet.
So passed the night, but with the first faint streaks
Of morn, he the vast host addressed:

"O tribes
Of Israël! who stand here armed, prepared
To enter battle, force a passage through
Fierce Amalek, who there, too confident,
With other nations joined, would hinder you,
And backwards drive the army of the Lord;
Yea, daringly hath said, 'Let us destroy
These sons of Jacob, ere their numbers grow
Too powerful. Come, therefore; take ye spoil.

Choose ye your maidens from their daughters fair.
Make ye their youth the tillers of your fields.
Ay, choose ye boys for those at home to mock.'
O Israël! these words shall be to you
A measure of your wrath. No injury
Have they received. Unwronged, this counsel comes
Forth from their lips. Therefore ye shall be strong
In battle, gaining honour from their slain.
Yea, from this day the nations shall perceive
That He, the Powerful, befriendeth you.
Be bold! wax ye not faint! Remember ye
Great Ægypt's plagues! the dread o'erwhelming sea!
The quails, the manna, and the yielding rock,
Its rushing stream! O Joshua! watch thee now
The battle's strife! The Lord be with thy sword!
My brethren, Aaron, Hur, let us ascend
This mount, and overlooking all, beseech
The aid of Him who, unseen, guides our steps."

Then they, the three, went up a hill-side path;
But midway to its summit reached, they heard,
As floating o'er the morning air it came,
The shout of Amalek, who quick advanced
In lengthened line, as when on the far sky

A bank of angry thunder-clouds doth rise,
Which darkeneth Heaven, with rolling voice bespeaks
The coming storm. Israël fearless heard
The challenge, saw that line, and slowly moved
With measured pace his wedge-like masses on
Towards his foe, who came as if to meet
Him with extended arms, whose fold might crush
His enemy, outflanked. But ah! one prays,
As lifts he up his hands upon the mount:
"O Lord! Thy people help, Thy counsel give;
Extend Thy terror-holding hand for us!"
E'en then the foremost wedge was seen to pierce
The vital centre, and, unfolding, turn
Its conquering faces tow'rds the rended line.
But swift from the support, opponent, rushed
Help in distress, which nigh drove back its foe.
But on the mount a trembling voice doth say,
"Aaron and Hur, these wearied arms grow faint;
Support them, ere they trembling reach my side.
From early dawn these lifted hands have helped
Our people; oft as wearied they have turned
Them downwards, Amalek hath gained him strength."
They heard, and brought a stone, whereon he sate,
Whilst Aaron on the right, and Hur on left,

Each held an arm. Supported thus, this cry,
More fervent, broke his silent prayer: "O Lord!
Thy people's foes are strong. The battle seems
Unto their side. Haste down! Confusion send!
Save for Thy Name, Thine Israël too weak!"
Then courage nerved anew the fainting heart
Of Israël; who, shouting loud, drove back
Exulting Amalek, unto whose aid
The whole reserve came up, one final cast
For poised victory. But on their rear,
Forth from the ambush leapt ten thousand men,
And through them terror spread. Then Joshua said
To Joseph, "Go! assail yon beaten foe!
Let these your swords drink blood! nor stay them till
The enemies of God shall be no more!"
Then cried Despair: "Fly! Fly! O Amalek!
The day is lost! The' Avenger's sword pursues,
All pitiless! Oh, haste thee yet to save
Our wives, our children, from captivity!"
But Israël pressed sore their flight; ceased not
From carnage, till enfolding Darkness bade,
E'en in the late-feared camp, "Stay ye this death."
But hark! Far off glad sounds of music greet
The brave, as Miriam strikes her timbrel, leads

Her sisterhood in songs of victory
And sacred dance: "All hail, ye brave ones! Come!
Join you with us! and let your voices swell
The hymn of praise unto the Lord our God!
Praise Him, ye brave! Praise Him, ye women fair!
For He hath fought! He hath the battle won!
There rose the Strong One! There he bowed him down!
There fell the man of war, oppressed in strife!
All hail, ye brave! Ye deemed not life too dear!
Now take ye spoil! Take ye a twofold share
Of youths! and maidens! noble of the foe!
Whom make you slaves! And to your daughters give
Ye golden earrings! anklets, too, of gold
Or silver! bracelets! linen! broidered work!
Cursèd is Amalek from this day forth!"

But now, descending from that higher mount,
The three draw nigh, whom waiting, Joshua stands
With many captains, hopeful that the news
Of victory may be theirs to tell. But ere
They speak in salutation, Moses thus
Triumphant greeting gives: "O Captains! Chiefs!
Who valiant led the army forth, welcome!
The Lord our God hath fought for Israël!

I know that He hath cast down Amalek
Before your feet! For even as I prayed,
My soul went forth in prayer, I saw the foe
Encompassed fall! I knew his end decreed!
I heard the wail his wives, his children gave!
O Amalek! thou art accursed of Heaven!
The Lord Himself shall blot thy memory out,
And bring thee low! Destruction is for thee!
With thy drawn sword hast thou met Israël?
Earned thus punition, dreadful bitter woe,
Which shall consume thy pride! The Lord hath sworn
He will to all thy generations wage,
O Amalek, His vengeful war with thee.
O Joshua! Captains! Thou, O noble! say,
How fought ye all? How did the people bear
Themselves in strife with the on-rushing foe?"

Then Joshua first in thoughtful answer said:
"This day have we more truly learned where lies
The scourge of war. The Lord made strong our hand,
Yet even so, the wave of triumph rolled
At times adverse. For Amalek displayed
His force, both skilled and numerous; a line
Extending far, 'gainst which Israël feared

To lose the strength in solid masses held,
Wherefore we sought by numbers' weight to pierce,
As thou hast said, the points of weakness, shown
By those, our enemies; and moments were,
When compassed on each side, we seemed to faint.
Nor till the sun was hastening to his rest
Gained we a vantage-ground. But then it seemed
As if that hostile line fell somewhat back,
On which, though wearied, we fresh courage took,
And pressing forward, broke and routed it.
Then, on resistless wave of victory borne,
We seized their camp, where Israël keeps watch,
Awaiting thy division of the spoil."

He ended speech; then Ægypt's noble said:
"O thou, at whose persuasion I have left
My childhood's land, my family, and my kin,
I ever find approval of such choice.
And speaking not of that dread vision, seen
When from its depths the sea arose, and whelmed
The host of Pharaoh Sethos, whilst the winds,
Too furious shrieked his dirge, behold, this day,
When in the varying strife I, wearied, strove,
Or watched the' assaulting foe his weapons wield,

Advance, retire, or wheel to either flank,
And as he moved, his stern grim order keep
All skilfully, then from the' unskilful turn
Away, and flee, I could but read anew
This truth, that there is One, Unseen, who rules,
And doth the weak make strong against the strong.
For though Israël hath approved himself
In battle valiant, patient as he fought;
Yet more than man was on his side this day."

Meanwhile, in such discourse, they nighly drew
To the encampment, whence glad chord and song,
Attuned by maidens, singing as they moved
In holy dance, made resonant the vale,
As wearied men cleaned war's sad harness o'er,
Of victory spake, made valour's action known.
All gathering now, with loud rejoicing greet
That man of prayer, whom Israël doth bring
Home to his tent, where thus he bids them well:

"Rejoice! 'Tis meet, O Israël! Rejoice!
Yea, from the gladness of your hearts outpour
You grateful praise unto the Lord your God!
To-day He fought for you! To-morrow's morn

Ye shall divide the spoil, and with me join
In sacred rite to Him, the Holy One!
That those, your generations, may recall
His great deliverance. Farewell this night!"

Soon sleep and silence reigned; yet brave men watched
With wakeful eyes, or listing ears, the weal
All night. But with the streaks of breaking day,
These cried to Israël: "Awake! Awake!
Haste to the captured camp! Your triumph see!
Prepare the spoil!" Then hasted they, and laid
In separate heaps the arms, the purple robes,
The silver work, the gold, and much-prized gems,
The cloth of Babylon, as captives stood
Around, from whom they formed woe's circle, filled
With fearing youth, and weeping sisterhoods,
And mothers grieving o'er their babes, now doomed
To slavery. Ere long, meek-hearted Moses came,
With Aaron, Joshua, and all who ruled
Chief in the host. These saw the spoil, then bade
He homage unto Heaven: "O Israël!
When Abraham, your father, heard from one
Of Lot's captivity, he quickly rose,
And, with his household servants, fast pursued

The kings confederate, whom he o'ertook,
And with swift onslaught changed their victor's cup
Of exultation to despondent grief;
Yet to the King of Salem gave the tenth
Of the regained, or yet more valued spoil,
So bearing witness that he had received from One,
Not gained himself, the victory.
Therefore, O Israël! be taught of him!
And on this first great battle-ground erect
Your glad acknowledgment, that God hath given
You triumph. Yet to all who strove be praise
For valiant deed, undaunted will to breast
The surging wave, opponent of your foe.
Let those receive due honour who have led
Your many thousands in the raging strife.
But chiefly praise to Joshua accord.
O Israël! he hath approved himself
A skilful captain, watchful o'er his charge!
And 'neath his valiant arm the noblest fell.
O Joshua! receive my warmest thanks!
Hold on thy path! for nations soon shall fear
To meet thy sword, and the approaching tread
Of Israël, led on to war by thee."

Then from the tribes loud acclamations spake
The flow of concord, where dissentient voice
Brake not the wave harmonious which rose,
And fell, and hushed, as chosen youth upraised
With twelve great stones an altar to the Lord,
Remembrances to these of favour given,
But to the foe whose vanquishment had built
Its Heaven-born, rugged shape, revengeful wrath
Unto his children's children yet unborn,
Till Amalek should die. O'er it they prayed
For help in like distress, as Love welled out
Her grateful praise to the All-Powerful,
Unseen, who gave them blessings as He willed;
But Ire and Anger showered o'er their foes,
Pride taught, beguiled, and Folly's bounden slaves.

Long time the guiding pillared cloud remained
Nigh to the battle-field, immovable;
Beholding which, Israël proved his armour there,
Exertion's fruit. Soon neighbouring nations heard
The dread report of Amalek's defeat;
And soon on rumour's wings was borne its sound
To Jethro's home, who thence Zipporah brought,
With her two sons, unto her absent lord.

He with great joy her gladsome summons heard,
And hasted, so to greet her father's age,
Embraced, and brought them home; and the long tale
Of freedom wrought, deliverance bestowed,
Told to them wondering. Then Jethro's heart
Beat loud against his breast. Amazed, he said:
"O son beloved! what mystery dost thou tell?
How fearful are the secret thoughts of God!
Unchangeable His will! For age on age
Ye have unpitied toiled, slaves 'neath a yoke
Too firm to break! But lo! the hour comes near!
His foretold covenant! No monarch leads
For you an army forth! No mission seeks
Your freedom! but from Pharaoh on his throne
Thou didst, with Aaron, fearlessly demand
Thy nation's liberty! and, wonderful!
No hand of vengeance closed thy daring mouth!
Yea, Israël is here in freedom glad,
While Pharaoh's realm for you hath been destroyed!
His first-born slain! his army's strength engulfed
Beneath the sea, which had before you fled!
What more remains? I render praise on High!
Blessing to God, who hath delivered you
From the Ægyptian, and from Pharaoh's hand!

By this I know the Lord excels all gods!
For in the great strong fortress of their pride,
He is made manifest above them all!
Therefore to Him I render sacrifice!
The offering is prepared! the altar nigh!
Let Israël before the Lord eat bread,
And make with me a covenant of peace!"

Then Aaron thus, with courtesy: "O Prince!
As sound of sweetest cymbal doth thy voice
Descend upon mine ear! To thee I owe
My brother's life, and our prosperity!
Yea, Israël is debtor to thy good,
For forty years of unsought favour shown
To one cast down in sad affliction's pit!
No speech, dissentient, will dispute thy claim
To make with us thy covenant of peace!
Yea, rather, we would say, 'Dwell thou with us!'"

Then next the Chief of Elders greeting gave:
"O agèd Prince, whose years have made with mine
An equal course, most gladly do we greet
And welcome thee, the shelterer of our Chief,
To these our tribes, our present, future homes!

Let now the sacrifice of peace be slain,
And join with us in words of lasting good!"

Full soon did oath and sacred rite confirm
Jethro and Israël for ever friends.
Then he on Moses leant, and turned to greet
Zipporah's steps. But here my song would hang
Seclusion's closest veil. Hence pause we not,
Till 'midst the gathered tribes we stand, and hear
Aggrievèd people seek redress for wrong,
Or fancied wrong, where daily Moses sate
In judgment; hearing oft-disputed truth
From morn till even; and his sentence gave
On the unjust, upheld the just; nor grieved
At labour, if the germs of good and ill
Might be made clear, encouraged, or reproved.
But Jethro is displeased; he loveth not
That needless care should overspread the brow,
Whose clouds should come, or go, as the great weal
Of all gave cause thereto. Wherefore he asked,
"My son! what meaneth this? Why sittest thou
From morn till even hearing Israël
Complain?" Moses replied: "Since Freedom's joy
First dwelt in Israël, it is their wont

To pray me thus inquire of the Lord
The side of error, and proclaim the right.
So judge I them, and teach God's holy laws.
What more requireth, let thy wisdom tell."
Then Jethro said: "My son, it is not good
That one should sit and judge a nation's ill.
The weight is far too much for him to bear;
It is too great for thee, for them likewise.
Thy strength will fail, and these thy people's good
Is in thy welfare bound. Are they not torn
With hope and expectation, waiting here
To tell their urgent need? Nay, let my years
Advise. Divide this weight; let all the laws,
The rites, and ways of God, be thine to teach.
Take thou before His face the causes hid!
But able leaders choose from Israël,
God-fearing, truthful men, abhorring vice
And covetous desire, lovers of good,
Whom place o'er thousands, hundreds, fifties, tens,
To rule and judge the people at all times,
In matters not too hard for them to know
The right from wrong, and punishment accord,
Such as may meet the provèd culprit's crime.
But mightier cause must for thy judgment wait,

For thou art highest. All confide in thee.
Thus shall this charge be lightened; and its load
Be shared by Israël. If so it seemeth well,
And God commands it, then thou shalt endure,
And all shall go unto their place in peace."

Then Moses said: "O father! these thy words
Speak true advice, most kind and requisite.
Unwont, for such long years, to rule the State,
We often err; yea, were we guided not
Of Heaven, we should wear out, and ruined fall
Into deep pits, dug by unskilful hands,
Too confidently clenched on reins forbid.
Behold, I will, as thou hast said, select
Me fittest men, so to divide the toil.
But evening closes, and we nightly yield
Our safety, ere sweet slumber gives us rest,
Into our Father's hand, His sheltering care.
Come join thee now, and blend thy prayer with ours."
Jethro agreed, and shortly from the camp
Glad sounds of prayer arose, as Aaron led
The swelling youthful voices thus in song:

"Grateful Thy servants are, O mighty Lord!

For gifts on gifts bestowed throughout this day!
For mercies shown on unrequited sin,
When we transgressed, forgetful oft of Thee!
Encompassed by Thy favour have we lived,
And 'neath Thy shield we ever hope to dwell!
Now we, unworthy, bless Thy Holy Name!
Ye heavens, O earth, God's majesty adore!
Ye realms of night, ye forest wilds, accord
With us obedience to the Lord on high!
Yea, join, O universe, and render now
Thy praises to the God of Israël!
The Holy One! the Everlasting Lord!"

Then, as before a gust of sudden wind
The standing corn doth bend, so lowly bowed
In worship every head, as Moses knelt,
And humbly sought God's blessing on the host.
This done, with hushed and peace-enjoying hearts,
All left, and sought the blessings they had prayed.
But soon as morn had from reposing earth
Drawn up the veil of night, then came the Chiefs
To Moses' feet in meeting numerous.
And after solemn prayer, the men renowned
For faith and skill, to calm with soothing word,

All justly said, the angry passions roused
By wrong, or fancied wrong, done or received,
Were chosen from their fellows, thence to judge
The many thousand homes of Israël.
So fled the days, and still the guiding cloud,
Not moving, spake approval on their care,
From Him who in its mystery was hid.
But when in perfectness each post was filled
By those who ruled high, or subordinate,
With shepherd's love, o'er their oft-wandering charge,
And Jethro to his pastoral home had gone,
Then rose the pillared column of the cloud,
And Israël his onward march renewed,
To meet in Sina's wilderness his God.

BOOK VII.

INTRODUCTION — SINA — THE COMMANDMENTS — MOSES ENTERS THE CLOUD—THE CALF—LEVI—MOSES RE-ENTERS THE CLOUD —SEES GOD'S GLORY—RETURN OF MOSES—HIS SHINING FACE —TABERNACLE.

ALMIGHTY Father, bounteous in grace!
Who guidedst once a mortal to Thy throne,
And in the cavern of the rock didst hide
Him whilst, by Mercy veiled, Thy glory passed
Before him, conscious gazing with his eye,
Uphold me now! Regard my faltering prayer,
And all mine heart suffuse with holy awe!
Forgiveness grant, and love pour in my breast,
That so with reverential look mine eyes
May view, my feet may tread, those sacred wilds,
Where terror-girt, with righteous justice clothed,
Thou touchedst this earth, and spakest with the seed,
The promised seed, of agèd Abraham,
When led by Moses, they near Sina stood,

And from the quaking mountain heard Thy voice;
Then conscience-stricken prayed that they no more
Might hear its holy sound. For those dread scenes
Can only by Thy gracious help be sung,
While Mercy holds the trembling hand from sin.

Beneath the shadowed frown of Sina's Mount
Israël, no one absent, stands arrayed
In robes unblemished, purely white; whilst fear
And hope commingling, overflow their hearts.
For wonderful, surpassing thought, the cause
Which brings the tribes unto the mountain nigh.
Behold, three days have gone since Moses bid
That each should sanctify himself, and set
Around the mountain bounds, whilst he proclaimed,
"None these may touch, on pain of instant death,
Be it proud man or beast who disobeys;
For God will from the heavens come down and speak
'Midst signs, and wonders, and loud trumpet sound
On the third morn upon this mountain top."
Now thither come, they stand; when in one breath
Each hears, each feels his inmost spirit say,
"Canst thou behold the holiness of God?"

For lo, the brightness of God's glory, wrapt
In clouds essentially dark to man,
Descended from the High and Holy place;
A soft bright light forth from the darkness flashed,
'Midst loud terrific thunder-peal, and spake
Of separation's gulf, guilt widely rent,
Which stands betwixt Jehovah's love and us.
That cloud of Heaven's forbidding fire abode
On Sina's peak; and as the' archangel trump
Thence sounded long and with great fulness loud,
Moses, the Mediator's type, was bid
Ascend the mount. Then with exceeding fear,
And faltering steps, as yet more loudly swelled
The herald trumpet sound, as shook the earth,
He in the darkness went, and spake with God.
But not, though called, might he continue yet
In that great nearness of the Holy One;
For scarce ascended he was bid, "Go down;
Forewarn the people that they venture not,
Or gaze upon the Lord, lest many die.
Yea, sanctify the priests, lest He break forth."
And still, though Moses urged that bounds were set,
Already set by God's command thereto,
The Lord, who tries, discerns each one, forbade

Him there to stay, till Sina, awful mount,
Was sanctified anew. Then Moses left
That peace-bestowing voice, and lowly turned
Unto the mountain's foot his trembling steps,
And Israël forwarned.

Such duty o'er,
Then as 'twere silence, from the darkness spake
A gentle voice, heard whilst the trumpet pealed.
And the Lord God gave Israël, gave man,
Ten sacred words, His teachers of all good,
First source of Law and Right, Virtue and Truth;
Which when the people heard, 'midst lightning flash,
And thunder-peal, and loud archangel blast,
Whilst smoke from burning Sina rose, they feared,
As mortal ne'er hath feared, save in the hour
When Adam fell, or the great Deluge roared.
They dared not near the circling flame, yet still
They would not from God's glory turn, but stood
Far off beholding that dread mystery;
And when in conscience' secret halls they knew
His soft withdrawal, as their silence woke,
Revealing plainer yet the vision seen,

They in their anguish begged with muttered breath
Of Moses thus: "Speak thou, and we will hear!
But may the Lord not speak with us! For death
Would be our portion should we hear again
The searching of His voice within our breasts."
For Israël there stood a living page,
Where man may learn the holiness of God,
Death of Impurity, who hides and dies.
Hence Moses to the fearing multitudes,
Upheld of Heaven, thus said: "Fear ye not now!
For God hath come to prove you, that His fear
May on your faces rest. Keep ye from sin!"
Then drew he nearer to the thick dark cloud
Wherein was God, Who spake therefrom, and gave
Those righteous laws, those promises which hold
No union with Injustice, and forbid
Agreement with Idolatry, whilst they
Exhort due honour unto man, and teach
That truest love, supporter in our need.
But then was Moses bidden to bring nigh,
Though not too nigh, Aaron and his two sons,
And with them seventy elders, who should stay
Some distance off, and worship, whilst he went
Alone near unto God.

Then from the mount
Moses returned, and told Israël all
The words and judgments of the Lord; which heard,
The whole assembly, whence they stood, replied,
"Lo, we will keep them all!" And there, perchance,
Upon that night were written, whilst God was near,
The first of those dear living words of love
Which heal the creature from his Maker strayed,
And wielded by true faith, do ever prove
A weapon, from whose point the dread arch-foe
Of God and man doth in confusion fly.

Next morn, of twelve great stones, as the twelve tribes
Brought each a witness, Moses there prepared
An altar to the Lord, whereon he slew
The sacrifice of peace, whose sacred stream
He sprinkled over all, then took the roll
Of covenant, replete with words of God,
Which bound Israël in observance safe,
Kept for the Lord, acceptor of their faith,
As through the latter blood we too receive
Admission unto Him, before whose face
The seraphs, angels, stand with figures veiled,
And led the called, the chosen, whence they saw,

O wondrous grace! the brightness of the Lord.
But as they worshipped, he himself was bid,
O Mercy, Love, most marvellous! to go
Within the thick dark cloud where God abode
In His essential glory veiled, unseen.
He bade the Elders, "Tarry till I come.
Let Aaron, Hur, supply my place short while;"
Then Joshua took some further distance still,
As nearer the Lord God he went. But ere
He stood upon the circle outermost
Of that dark cloud, he said, "Remain thou here;"
And he, meek child of prayer, approached,
Yea, entered in, where we may venture not,
Unless by faith through Him he typified.

But ah, alas! such pleasant verse must change
To sadder theme. For there by Sina's mount,
Beneath that glory and o'ershadowing cloud,
All Israël, save those of Levi found
Still faithful, turned apostate from their hope,
Deemed Moses faithless, and them Godless left.
For when for forty days Moses had dwelt,
Not having earthly food, upheld by God,
Sustained by Sina's His perfection in the cloud

Of darkness veiling Him, there hearing words,
Beholding wondrous things, instructions given
Of rites and symbols, forecast shades, whence gleams
Of truth might shine upon Humility,
As her despair should pierce the pendent veil,
And see the Saviour, her sure sacrifice;
Then do we read that he was bid, "Descend
Again the mount. For Israël hath strayed,
Hath turned from their obedience, made a calf
Of molten gold, and worshipped thereunto;
Have sacrificed, and said, 'These be thy gods!'"
Therefore the Lord would slay them all, and bring
From Moses' seed a mighty nation forth.
But Moses prayed, and standing in the breach,
O power of prayer! stayed there God's angry sword!
Then bearing thence the tablets graved by God,
Who bade him go, he left the' enfolding cloud,
And where the wild beast ventured not its foot,
And eagles turned away, by silence awed,
E'en nigh, though not too nigh, in worship bowed
Found Joshua, waiting him on Sina's Mount,*
Kept from the pit where Israël was lost.
But ah! as they descend the shelving path,

* Exodus xxiv. 30; xxxii. 17.

'Midst rock and stream, what sounds grate on their love?
Loud shouts from fallen Israël ascend,
And deepen yet the grief which Moses feels.
But still, more saddened still, they sorrowing see
This woeful sight. The youth of Israël
With shouts and songs of wine, forgetting shame,
Before a golden idol dance naked;
Whilst oft this cry in sullen accents breaks
Forth from their erring lips: "Behold your gods!"
O heaven! declare whence came such lowering rites?
For lo! a pit, ten thousandfold more deep
Than that wherein sad Ægypt's people groped,
Had Israël with their own hands dug out,
E'en in the sight of God; yea, whilst His voice
Yet spake on hill-side path, and caverns held
The echoes of their oath-bound covenant,
So soon forgotten, quickly broken, lost.
O heavens! declare whence had such folly sprung?
I know, as Adam, so Israël fell.
Pride-slain, beguiled of Satan, they conceived
'Twere possible to symbolise that form
Which yet no man hath seen; but otherwise,
May not permitted fall here glorify
Love over fear, and honour Calvary

O'er Sina's Mount? But such dread sight
Moses could not endure; nor would his zeal
Keep still. He with prophetic spirit dashed
The tablets, graved by finger of our God,
His covenant of grace with Israël,
Down on the ground. Then o'er the wanton crowd,
As hurled he there the image from its base,
Full loudly wept, and uttered Heaven's reproach:

"O disobedient and stiff-neckèd race
Of Israël! have ye indeed fulfilled
Your oaths, so lately sworn before the Lord?
Do ye yet hope that He will keep for you
That covenant which ye have now refused?
Yea, surely, He will not regard the vows
Ye have dissolved! See, at my feet do lie
His broken tablets, there a sign too sure
Of your rejection by the Lord this day,
Who will, instead of mercy, pour His wrath
For this accursèd thing upon your tribes."
Here Aaron broke upon his fervent speech,
Pale, fearful, lest impelling love should speak
A curse more fearful, blot forgiveness out:
"Oh, stay thy wrath! this sin is mine. I made

The accursèd thing! My hand moulded it!"
Then Moses turned, and unto Aaron said,
"Brother, what have the people done to thee,
That thou hast brought so great a curse on them?"
Then Aaron unto him, beseeching, urged:
"Let not the anger of my lord wax hot!
Spare now thy kindred's fault, thy nation's crime!
Are not the people many? Tumult sways
Them oft! they thought thee gone, for ever gone!
They frequent came impetuous, and cried,
'Make thou us gods to guide us in the way;
We know not where Moses hath gone from us!'
Then I, alas! I yielded to their fears!
I bade them bring me gold, from which I formed
This molten calf. And I have further made
Them dance thus naked, ignorant, ashamed,
Despised of man; for when they pressed me sore,
Woe, woe, I feared! Behold, they're in thine hand!
Restrain thy righteous wrath, and for me plead!
Entreat the Lord for them, that He will make
His covenant anew with these our tribes!"
Then Moses grieved, nigh to the ebbing flow
Of life's more secret wave, to Aaron said,
"Why didst thou this, uplifting not thine eye

Unto the darkening cloud o'er Sina spread,
There visible to all? Oh, hadst thou looked
But once, there hadst thou seen its deepening shade,
Thine heavenly reproof, and stayed this sin,
This dreadful sin, which like the leprous spot
Must now be cut by hand unpitying,
Devoid of sympathy, from Israël;
Ere retributive vengeance, breaking forth,
Shall in one breath consume the whole race saved
From Ægypt's tyranny! Oh, hear my cry,
Ye followers of our God, if yet there are,
Amidst this day's great woe, unstained sons,
Yet guiltless, who have bowed no knee hereto!
Oh, gather ye! lest Heaven awakened bid
Fierce flames of jealousy go forth, destroy!"

Then on his bitterness, that hour, there shone
A beam of joy, as Levi's sons stood forth,
And through the heedless throng respondent sped.
These gathering nigh to Moses, seemed a band
Prepared, though sorrow streamed down on their hearts,
To do their awful work, and vindicate
In brethren's blood God's truth. Then Moses said,
"Welcome, O faithful youth, to Levi born!

In sadness overwhelmed, weighed down by grief,
I've called you unto fearfulness and dread!
But Heaven is not regardless of your faith;
To-day, obedient servants of your God,
He calls you sons! His own in Israël!
Behold, the voice of this dread crime now wails
Along the courts on high. Wrath is restrained.
With you it rests to stay its breaking forth!
Hear God's forbearing voice! For His great Name
Gird ye your swords! Each one search through the camp!
Slay ye your brethren! Slay your dearest friend!
Let every man his neighbour's son destroy!"
Then swift the ministers of wrath, those sons
Unstained, there heeding not sweet Friendship's voice,
Amidst the throng of evil-doers went,
And, sword in hand, they, with three thousand slain,
Drove back Israël from his sin, and stayed
Its Hell-born rites. Meanwhile had Moses gone
Within his tent, where, cast down on the ground
Before the Lord, he passed the night in prayer.
But morning woke; then where the image lay
Low in the dust he brought all Israël,
And thus reproached and taught them of their sin:

" O children, once beloved of God ! O sons
Of faithful Abraham ! how have ye lost
The path of truth, and fallen from the height
Whereon ye stood, pre-eminent on earth !
God-led ! beloved of Him ! How have ye lost
His light, which guided you ! How dark the cloud
Still hanging o'er the pit, your sin hath dug
Full low in error's vale ! How strong the chains
Which your own hands have forged, enslaving you !
O Israël ! your crime is black as night !
The heavens do grieve ! the earth doth weep ! but Hell
Rejoices in your fall ! What can I say ?
I, even I, though trembling much, must go,
And plead before the holiness of God,
That He will in His wrath remember yet
His all-enduring mercy, and forgive."

So far he said, then up the hill-side went;
Not now, as once, to enter in the cloud
Of the Eternal Presence, but to kneel
On outer circle ; there confession make :
" Alas ! O Lord ! this people they have sinned
A great, great sin. They've made them gods of gold !
Yet now, oh ! if Thou wilt, forgive their sin !

If not, blot me, I pray thee, even me,
Out of Thy book, which Thou, O Lord, hast written."
Then Moses heard, "He who hath sinned shall bear
His sin, and from the Book be blotted out.
Lead thou the people! Them Mine angel leads.
I will remember, when I visit sin."

Thus interceding, he for them long while
Fell down before the Lord; so far found grace.
Then took the' accursèd calf; burnt it with fire;
Ground it to dust; and forced Israël, plagued,
Repentant, there to drink, on water strawed,
The bitter draught, their self-confessèd wrong;
Then pitched outside the camp a separate tent
Whereto the seekers of the Lord might go,
And learn to love the Righteousness which smote.
Thereto he led, in simple garments robed,
All Israël, crest-fallen, weeping, bowed
In prayer, imploring God to stay His hand
Of wrath, forgive, and dwell yet in their midst.
More nighly come, the people wait, whilst he
And Joshua go within the Holy Place,
Where entered, lo! the pillar of the cloud
Descendeth down, and at the doorway stands;

And as adoring people rise, fall low,
And worship, God doth speak face unto face
With Moses, as a man addresseth friends.
And there He heard His servant's voice beseech,
More earnest still, His favour, and gave ear.
So His grieved Spirit then was reconciled
To those who knew Him present, yet had sinned.
But now, O wondrous thought! transcendent faith!
Moses upheld, prayed furthermore, nor lost
He meekness thus: "Lord God! show me Thy glory!"
And here my spirit fails, can find no word
Meet to express God's condescending love.
He heard, and granted, though not to the full
His high desire. For on such lofty height
Man could not live; Humility would die,
And Pride, self-taught, burnt through, would headlong fall
Into eternal death, its living flame.
Yet he, unto His creaturehood, beheld
Glory, whereon the' archangel gazeth not,
As on two fresh-hewn tablets God re-wrote
The Covenant, once of Unworthiness
Destroyed, but now restored by Heavenly Love,
Who heard Repentance grieving o'er her sin.

Moses in morning watch such tablets took,
And climbed dark Sina's solitude alone;
Then slowly reaching down towards him, the cloud
Of God's enfolding glory wrapped him round,
Ascended up, that he therein might dwell
For forty days and nights, sustained of God.
And there, o'ershadowed by His hand, preserved
As stood he in a rock-side cleft, cut out
By God for man, he saw His glory pass,
And heard the cherubim proclaim His name:
"The Lord! Lord God! the merciful, gracious,
Long-suffering God! in truth and goodness full!
His mercy holds up thousands, healeth sin,
Iniquity, transgression; but He clears
Not thus the evil-doer, whose false deed
He visiteth to children's children's child."
Then Moses hasted, knelt, bowed to the earth,
And still for Israël beseeching, won
Great promises of love, and help which God
Bestowed, and on the stones re-wrote ten words,
Whose clear fulfilment is the sign which seals
The true-born son of Him, jealous in love.

But forty days fulfilled, Moses came down

Dark Sina's side, where Israël had wept
Meanwhile, confessed their sin. They now drew nigh
To their returning Chief; but ah! what stays
Their feet? Why fall they back? Lo! glory shines
On Moses' face, though unperceived of him,
Meek man of God, a mediator placed
Between them and the Lord. He prayed them, "Come!
Why tremble ye? 'Tis me, O Israël!"
Then went they near, and gladly heard him tell
God's words of love. But as he spake, he knew
The streaming glory, and veiled o'er his face,
That they might not be shamed. But ah! alas!
That veil hath shadowed o'er Israël's faith!
And though the great transforming Light hath shone,
In its due time, forth o'er the darkened world,
From them proceeding, they beheld it not,
But groping in the mist, have ventured yet
Not through its rent, nor seen the Holy Place,
Although their sacrifice hath ceased, and blood
Hath spoken all its tale, made clear their way.

Before them Moses stood for ever veiled;
But in the Sanctuary not thus he stood
Before the Lord. Therein he symbol gave

That all must thither go who would see God.
But now he other mission spake: "O sons
Beloved! O children of the Lord! hear ye
What grace, what honour, Mercy hath bestowed
On you! It is your privilege, this day,
To give God gifts, your free-will offerings,
To build and sanctify unto His Name
A tabernacle, where He will vouchsafe
To dwell, and speak, in His appointed rites,
With you, and bless you seeking there His face.
O Israël! haste ye, spare not your hands,
But grateful give! Declare your love! your zeal
Unto the Lord! forgiving! reconciled!"

So were his words. Then swiftly through the camp
Ran Israël, each to his tent, and brought
Rich gifts of gold, or silver, jewels, brass;
Nor thus content—their women spun them cloth
Of various hue. These, laid at Moses' feet,
Soon reached such height, that those appointed left,
Each one, his post, and unto Moses said,
"We pray thee stay the gifts of Israël!
We have too much! Sufficient store is made,
And daily is the' abundant wealth increased!"

Then through the host the proclamation ran,
"Bring no more gifts! God's need hath been supplied!"
Then Israël felt glad; for all had given,
Had grasped the moments, ever flown, to build
The house of God, Love built with living stones,
Affection's labour, where each one may work,
Being built himself, and building others up,
As over it instructed masters pass,
Who weave the sympathetic cords, which none
May break, or change, as there the Builder sits,
Beholds each workman's work, and draws his eye
To Him, Author of good, their God, their love!

So Israël built up their Holy Place,
The Tabernacle in the wilderness—
Its robes, and curtains, vessels, Mercy-seat,
Where the Lord God would dwell, be worshipped, praised.
Then all things ready, Moses came, and saw
Their finished work, and blessed them for their zeal.

BOOK VIII.

CONSECRATION OF TABERNACLE—OF AARON—DEATH OF HIS TWO ELDEST SONS—THEIR BURIAL—HOBAB—SEVENTY ELDERS—QUAILS—MIRIAM'S SEDITION—SPIES—CALEB AND JOSHUA—ISRAEL—BATTLE—SABBATH-BREAKER—KORAH — DATHAN AND ABIRAM—THEIR DEATH—ISRAEL—AARON'S ROD.

In every holy sign and rite, save one,
Complete, the Tabernacle waits its Lord
Creator, to encompass, enter it.
Still is the air, no sound or footfall stirs
The mighty throng, as, lifting up his hands,
Moses entreats the High and Holy One,
A consecration, gracious, visible,
Of that His chosen House—acknowledgment
Of man again on earth, since Eden saw
Him, disobedient, fly, and hide from God.
His prayer is heard, and Heaven moves at its voice.
The cloud descends, no eye endures the light
Which streams therefrom; but on their faces cast,

Moses and Israël adoring pray,
There conscious that God dwells 'midst them on earth.

And veiling o'er these sacred courts, the cloud
Of glory with excessive brightness fills
The Holy Place of the Almighty's rest
In Israël. They, wondering at such love,
With vision hid, fast in both hands, retire
From the bright flood. But Moses on the ground
Still lies before the entrance veil, as Hope
Bids Patience wait, till o'er the deepened hush
The voice of God exceeding silence brings.

Long while before the veil he daily heard
Of sacrifice more holy, offered up
By Aaron and his sons, when they, seven days
Anointed, set apart with sacred blood,
By him for God, had so long stayed, nor passed
The curtained door, where Holiness kept watch,
To stay all who uncleansed should issue thence.

Thus sanctified, Aaron and his four sons
Have stayed alone in God's most Holy House,
Nor passed therefrom; and on the altar lies,

For priests and people, an Atonement slain.
Aaron, High Priest of God, comes forth, and o'er
Assembled Israël extends his hands,
And blesseth them:

"The Lord bless thee, and keep thee!
The Lord make His face shine upon thee!
And be gracious unto thee!
The Lord lift up His countenance on thee!
And give thee peace!"

Then from the Holy of Holies answer came:
"God's breath, bright flame of glory," acceptance shown,
Which on the altar burnt, consuming there
The sacrifice. But ah! what folly blinds
The elder sons of Aaron? Lo! they fill
Their censers with unholy fire! They burn
Unbidden incense before God! No cloud
Of mercy intercedes, nor veils, but flames
Of wrath; His breath of jealousy consumes
Them with the stroke of cherub's angry sword.

Then Moses, Prophet of the Lord, ere Grief

Can utter wailing voice, or lift her hands
To tear the robes which separate God's Priest,
And seal him Holiness unto the Lord,
To Aaron saith: "My brother, be thou still!
Oh, suffer not the strength of Nature's love
To speak, intrusive on God's Sacrifice!
Upbraid thou not, nor these thy sons, His voice!
His wisdom's breath! Uncover not your heads,
Nor rend your clothes! For ye may die! Yea, wrath
May come on all the people for your sakes.
Oh, let Israël now bewail for ye,
As for their kin, this burning wrought of God!
On fear of death, your feet may not o'erpass
The threshold of His Sanctuary. Behold,
The Lord's anointing oil rests over you!
O Mishael! Elzaphan! hither come!
And from before this holy place take forth
Your brethren out the camp!"

Then Aaron stayed,
And his two living sons restrained their grief,
Yea, silent stood, as from before God's House
Their kindred bore their heart's affection thence;
And Israël bewailed their sin, and feared

Its sudden end; but Aaron's grief was great.
He could not eat, nor could his sons partake
Of Sin's atonement, for they greatly feared.
And Moses wept in heart, yet faithful still,
E'en in his grief, he-searched for, found untouched
The offering, and reproved; yet was content,
As they, submissive, pleaded their sad grief,
Whose kindred voice found echo in his breast.

But dwelling not upon such woe, we pass
More swiftly by; nor look with hasty glance
On scenes deemed worthy of a longer song.
Hence, gazing at the pillared cloud, we see
Its column rising, bid Israël, "Leave
This your short rest; march to your heritage!"
Then with loud blast, on silver trumpet blown,
The sons of Aaron call to east and south,
To west and north, where the four camps arise,
To follow those who bear the Ark of God.
But leaving Sina's shade, Moses entreats
Zipporah's brother, Hobab, thus to make
The blessing of the' Israëlites his own:

"Behold, O kinsman, Israël doth leave

These solitudes, these rocks, where God hath made
With us a lasting Covenant of Love.
We're journeying to the place of which He said,
'Lo, I will give it you!' Come thou with us,
And we will do thee good! Behold, the Lord
Hath spoken good concerning Israël!"
But Hobab said: "I will not go with you;
I will depart to mine own land and kin."
Still Moses urged: "I pray thee, leave us not,
For thou dost know, we often must encamp
Amidst the wilderness. Be thou our sight;
Yea, be our eyes therein. It shall be so,
Such goodness as the Lord shall do to us,
We will do unto thee." Then Hobab said,
"Consenting, now I go. The Lord hath heard!
He witnesseth this day 'tween Israël,
And those, my children, who shall dwell with them,
Partakers of their good!" Him Moses heard,
And said, "Herein my heart is glad! No thought
Of grief remains! For thee the Lord will bless,
And Israël shall in thy joy rejoice!"

But now the Ark o'ershadowing cloud doth move,
And Moses, standing forth, entreats his God:

"Rise up, O Lord! and let Thine enemies
Be scattered! Yea, let them who hate Thee flee!"
Then was the Ark of Covenant borne on,
Until in Paran's wilderness the cloud
Showed it its rest, and Israël his camp.
But ah! alas! while followed they in joy,
Not so they stayed, for scarcely camped, the voice
Of Pride was heard 'gainst Wisdom murmuring.
She said, "Why thus delay? Why rest we here?
Our hearts desire the land! Let us proceed!
Our thousand folds are brave! The oath is sworn!
O Israël, march to your heritage!"
'Twas in the outmost tents she spake, unheard
Of Elders, Chiefs, yet heard before the Lord;
For Vengeance there awoke, and fire burst forth.
Then Moses heard Death's wail, and praying, stayed
Her breath. But Pride, yet unabashed, now spake
With the mixed multitude conjoined, who walked
With Israël. She bade them lust for flesh,
And weeping, crowd round Moses, beg of him,
"Give thou us food! Our soul despiseth now
This manna, so we eat it not! Give flesh
To eat, as erst in Ægypt we enjoyed!"
Then Vengeance left once more the courts of Heaven

On mission dread. On Earth God's servant prayed,
Not for the people, but for their great charge,
Which he all singly bore before the Lord,
And felt too much. God answered him, and said
That He would bless approvèd Elders, brought
By Moses to His Presence, and would take
A portion of His Spirit, given to him,
And pour it over them, that they might share
His charge, and He would give Israël flesh
To eat for one whole month, till they should loathe
Such food, because they had despised the Lord,
And wept. But Doubt had nurtured Doubt, and spake
From Moses thus: "Behold, O gracious Lord,
The multitude 'midst whom I am, do count
Six hundred thousand footmen! Thou hast said,
'I will give flesh, that they may eat one month.'
Shall all the flocks and herds be slain for them?
Shall all the fish within the sea be brought
Unto one place, that they may be sufficed?"
God bade him trust. His hand had waxed not short!
His word should be fulfilled! So were endowed
Of Elders threescore eight, as Glory shone
Bright o'er their heads, and two within the camp,
Who deemed themselves unmeet for honour, hence

Had stayed therefrom. Not so esteemed of God,
Who took of Moses' spirit, gave to them,
And bade them prophesy; but bid Reproof
Be silent, when she spake by Joshua's mouth.

But what is this? Behold, the storm-blast sweeps
With whirlwind speed the plain! White are its feet!
Its waist more darkly clothed with power! Its head
With lurid cloud of terror crowned, is hid
In Heaven, enflamed! Its voice is thunder's peal,
Its tongue is lightning, and it rends the rocks
Before its face! 'Tis gone! and lo, the wind
Blows fiercely in its train for one full night,
And morning sees dark flocks, swift hasting on,
Black as the cloud which breaks the burning glow
Of India's plain, and quails fall round the camp,
Two cubits high, and one day's journey long.
Scarce come their flocks, ere lustful Israël,
In one vast mass, tumultuous begin
To kill, and gather flesh, bestowed of God,
Not now in love, but wrath. None stay their hand,
Till darkness twice hath overspread the earth,
So in receiving more than asking sin,
More plainly say, "The Lord's right hand may fail."

But ah! displeasure wakes, and plague-spots seal
The unbeliever's death, ere his false lips
Close on his sin-sought food. Thus many die,
And Israël repentant eats no more,
But fearing saith, "These are the graves of lust!"

Proceed they on to Hazaroth. But there,
Alas! sedition's voice is heard again,
From Miriam now, and Aaron too, who say
To Moses in the tent, "O brother! hear!
For lo! we tell the sorrow of our hearts,
Which day by day increaseth, grows until
We may no more refrain from telling thee
Wherein our bitterness doth lie. We grieve,
And Israël speaks not, because that thou
Hast taken for thy wife Zipporah, born
Of Æthiopian blood. All wondering, ask,
'Are we indeed God's chosen on the earth?
Are we yet pure? Unmingled with the tribes
Which worship wood and stone, by Him forbid,
Lest their alliance should by gentle speech
Withdraw our hearts from yielding Him that love,
That honour, and that praise which is His due?'
With thee the stranger in our camp doth dwell!

O brother! Levi speaks. Remove their shame;
For error dwells with thee, or wilt thou say,
'The Lord hath spoken only by my voice?'
Hath He not spoken unto us likewise?"

Nought answer Moses said. His meekness gave
To her vehemence no response. But swift
As sudden wind the Lord Almighty's voice
Bade them unto the threshold of His house.
Thither they went; thereto the cloud came down.
God summoned Aaron forth, with Miriam;
And openly, in front of all, rebuked
The secret wrong. But ere man's spirit woke
From its confusion, lo, the cloud arose,
And Aaron saw, aghast, on Miriam's face
The Lord's reproval shown; for she was white
As fallen snow—a leper. Then he made
Confession of their crime, and earnestly
His brother's intercession prayed, that God
Might grant forgiveness, and for Mercy's sake
Not suffer Miriam's punishment to rest
In dread continuance, but all gracious heal
Her smitten flesh. Moses besought the Lord,
And He forgave. Yet, for her cleansing, said,

"Let her be shut outside the camp seven days."
But she thus purified, Israël moved
To Paran's wilderness, wherefrom they sent,
By God's commandment, spies to view the Land
Of Canaan in its beauty, and to learn
Its overflowing good, its nation's strength.
Twelve men were chosen, one from every tribe,
Renowned in war; but not for simple faith,
Belief in God. Then Moses bade: "Come ye,
And hear, before all Israël, your charge!

"O ye, my brethren! of your tribes approved
To share this honour, first to view the Land
Of Canaan, ere we tread its promised fields,
Remember ye the Lord your God! His power
On Sina shown! His love and faithfulness
To us, the seed of Abraham, His friend!
His wrath on Ægypt poured because of you!
Trust ye in Him. From southwards search the land.
Regard its people; its great cities view;
Its strongholds see; and of its pastures learn
If they be fat or lean, or trees abound
Thereon. Be strong in heart; be not dismayed.
The land is yours. To these, your brethren, bring

An earnest of its fruits, for they would know
That faithful men have this their charge performed,
And that God's fear hath kept you from all harm."

Then left the spies, and travelling from Zin,
Reached unto Rehob, whence they turned their steps,
And nigh to ancient Hebron plucked, where ran
The brook of Eshcol's fertilising stream,
One cluster of the vine, nor sought for more,
Since that by two was carried, no light weight,
Free gift of Nature, earnest of her stores,
Wherewith she blessed the heritage of God.
Nor spared their hand to fill with other fruit
A vessel large. Then forty suns uprisen,
They sought their brethren camped near Rephidim,
Yet with such good, Unfaithfulness refused,
On God's behalf, to give reports of joy;
Dismayed at man, they guiltily thus spake
In fearing accents unto Israël:

"O brethren! would that ye, instead of us,
Had seen the goodness of the promised land!
'Tis rich; 'tis beautiful; 'tis very good;
'Tis full of hills and vales; while running streams

Pour forth their waters through the cultured ground,
Which yields all garden fruit, and corn, and herb.
Great woods are there, amidst whose pleasant groves
The bee hath made her home. The place is fair,
Exceeding far our speech. See, here we bring
Rich earnest, witnessing this day our care.
But ah! alas! oh, would we had not seen
Its beauties or its good; for no weak hand
Retains possession of our heart's desire.
Not small or few wall-girt huge cities fill
The land. Ah! there great Anak's children rule!
Southward is Amalek, and in the hills
The Hittite, Jebusite, and Amorite;
But towards the sea, and Jordan's bank, there dwell
Three sons of Canaan, whose wrought chariots roll
With iron wheels upon their enemies cast down!"
Here Caleb interposed, sole faithful left,
Since Joshua, grieving, had to Moses gone.
These 'twain had with their fellows searched, but seen
With different sight the terrors of the land.
The one before his master's face now told
Its goodness, and his brethren's wondrous fear;
The other thus their shrinking hearts reproved:

"O Israël! regard them not. How, sirs!
Do ye thus vex the Lord's inheritance?
Yea, and the Lord Himself? If ye have dread,
Would ye desire your kindred to forget
The power of the Almighty? Speak ye truth!
Did ye not hear the whisper, 'Lo! their camp,
Their dreadful camp is nigh; our hearts are faint?'
My brethren, heed ye not their recreant voice!
Oh, be ye bold! Remember ye God's word
Unto yourselves, and unto Abraham!
The land is ours, unto our fathers given;
And well might these our armies enter it.
But now the Lord will aid. He for us broke
A kingdom's power more powerful than these.
What can we fear? The prevalence is ours."
But here the ten lamenting, weeping, cried:
"Oh, hearken not! We have not strength to go!
Nor can we fight the' inhabitants thereof!
Their power excels. The land doth scarce support
Its multitudes, who towered in their height
High over us, as trees surpass the herbs.
We saw the sons of Anak, giant-born!
Giants themselves, with whom your brethren seemed
As grasshoppers upon the garden shrub!"

So far they spake, when Israël gave one
Loud cry of anguish, wept all through the night,
O'erwhelmed in bitterness of soul despair!

So Israël. But in the Holy Place
No voice of man was heard, as on the ground,
With hands outstretched, meek-hearted Moses lay
Long while before Jehovah's Mercy-seat;
There silent, pleading still, and seeking words,
Confession's voice for guilt, refusing thus
The heritage of God; entreating grace
To glorify forgiveness in His name.

Through the long night his intercession kept
Watch o'er consuming fire, there bursting forth;
Nor comfort found. Yea, morn brought deeper gloom
On the dark chambers of his grief; for there,
E'en while he prayed, this thought, more dreadful still,
Found rest in Israël: "Would God we lay
In Ægypt dead, or in the wilderness!
Why hath the Lord brought us so far to die?
Shall not our wives, our children be a prey?
Come let us stone these sons to Amram born!
Let us a captain choose, and hence return

To Ægypt's pastures!" Such, alas! their cries.
And savage crowds, too eagerly, had sought
Fulfilment of their demon wish; but Caleb ran
With Joshua, so to stay Rebellion's deed.
Each rent his clothes. Both cried with single voice,
"O men of Israël! why harbour ye
Such thoughts against the Lord? Oh, pause herein!
Reject the words of false ones, speaking now
Not what they saw, but what their recreant hearts,
Fear-taught, revealed! We, too, have searched the land—
Have seen what they have seen. Believe in us.
It is exceeding good. If God delights,
He will keep us therein, and give it us.
Rebel ye not against the Lord, nor fear
The people's strength. Are they not as our bread?
Yea, their defence is gone! O Israël!
The Lord hath come to us. Fear ye not them!"

But lo! the sons of Amram now are seen
Forth issuing from God's house; at sight of whom,
This savage demon cry breaks from the crowd:
"Arise, O Israël! Ye are deceived!
Stone ye these men, and unto Ægypt go!"

But now the Holy of Holies shines with light
Of glory streaming forth, protecting them.
No trumpet sound proclaims, "The Lord is here!"
But rebels have no voice, nor longer hold
The stones, already raised, as dead they fall,
And there the prophet, priest, low on the ground,
Beseech the Lord. Then Moses, rising, goes
With trembling steps towards the inner veil;
But venturing not unto the Mercy-seat,
For the bright flood, he in the outer court,
O dreadful sound! hears Israël cast off,
Rejected by his God, who will from Moses raise
A mightier nation than the one cast off.
But now the vision seen on Sina's Mount,
From that cleft rock, taught Moses in his prayer.
O attributes of God! ye first give man
Desire of prayer, then teach him how to clothe,
Beyond denial-strength of love, his wish
Not known till ye had taught. For Moses found
So far acceptance; Israël should still
Be God's peculiar race. But though His Light
Should fill the Earth, yet they whose eyes had seen
Its rising should not view the land, His gift.
They had ten times refused His love, provoked

His wrath, and hearkened not, therefore should die.
But Caleb, who had fully done His will,
Should enter in, and with his seed possess
The land, o'er which his faithful feet had trode.
But Israël should take the sea-side path
Toward the Wilderness, and die therein;
E'en all of twenty years who had thus sinned,
And lost the Holy Land, wherein should dwell
The two more faithful found, the rest should mourn
For forty years, as had been searched the land
For forty days; but these their little ones,
Of whom they said, "Shall these not be a prey?"
Should so long bear their sin, then ent'ring dwell
In Canaan, given by God, refused by them.

So spake God's voice, and on the Mercy-seat
Once more His glory stayed, nor streamed therefrom.
But in the camp His angel Death went forth,
And slew the slanderers ten; and Moses left
That outer court, and his dread mission told
To Israël. But folly strange they weep,
Rebellious, not for crime, but punishment
Of good withheld, as erst refused, and cry,
With pride-born courage, "Gather ye for war,

O Israël! seize ye yon mountain height!
Lo! we are here, and hence we will advance
Unto the place whereof the Lord hath said,
'I will bestow!' Behold, we have transgressed!"
Then Moses hasted, and with anxious voice
Thus sought to raise Transgression's blinding veil:

"O Israël! why tempt ye God? provoke
His anger-sword? The battle is not yours!
Its honour is your foe's. Mourn ye, and weep!
Obedient turn, whene'er yon cloud shall rise,
Your steps of sorrow towards the Wilderness.
Ye may not change the Will unchangeable!
Yet true repentance hath a lessened grief.
Ascend ye not, lest ye come down ashamed
Before your foes, encouraged of the Lord,
Who dwells not now with you. If ye go up,
There shall ye find two banded nations camped,
Fierce Amalek, and Canaan's dreaded sons.
Ye left the Lord, therefore He hath left you."

But Pride meanwhile had louder, louder cried;
And Israël, rebellious, rebel led,
Had formed his thousands, marched against the foe!

Fierce rolls the tide of war, a mighty wave
To whelm the guarded crest. But see! what stays
The leaders? Lo, they backwards fall! Great stones
Hiss through the air! They kiss the ground! they die!
As Fear unfolds her blackened wings, Dismay
Reports a thousand dead; and Terror cries,
"Return! Flee ye! Begone! Lo! Anak's sons
Are there." Then downwards fled the surging host
In headlong rush, and loudly rose the shouts
Exultant of their foe, whose swords drank blood
Full thirty miles, e'en unto Hormah's town.
Nor pausèd there, had not th' increasing night
Bade its fierce stroke, "Rest thou unsatisfied."
Then darkness-veiled, crest-fallen Israël
Re-sought their camp, wherein they found God's Ark
Of Covenant 'midst the obedient safe;
And gladly on the morrow saw His cloud,
Uprising, lead them weary, weeping back
From Canaan to the Wilderness, whilst then
God's terror stayed their foes' pursuing sword.

Tow'rds rocks, and desert wilds, and dreary wastes
Of barrenness, downcast the host began
Its unsought journey, Evil's bitter fruit,

And long unto obedience shamed, they hushed
The tongue of Murmur. Yea, now zealous, found
A Sabbath-breaker gathering sticks, whom seized,
They led to Moses' seat, and, bidden, stoned
Outside the camp, condemned of God and man,
Despiser of Earth's covenanted rest.

Short-lived such zeal. Too soon Rebellion wakes,
As wealthy Korah, proudly, to the chiefs
Of Levi saith: "See ye how Moses wields
All power in Israël! Yet in these wilds
Few are our wants. Each morn the ground doth yield
Our needful food. The sword stays not our path.
For since that dreadful day, when Canaan cried
Exultant over us, scarce have we seen
Aught sign of foreign tribe; else held I speech.
But now I am distressed. O Levi, hear!
Are not our customs changed, our ancient rite
Of government? For Moses doth select,
Perchance not knowing us; perchance he knows
Of merit hid, save from a nearer kin,
Our chiefs, of him discerned pre-eminent,
Unknown, till he their merit fully proved.
Selection strange! The priesthood hath been filled

Not by the first-born, else had Reuben given
From great Eliab's sons, or Peleth's one,
Chief of their princes, worthiest to uphold
By wealth, by birth, its honoured, cherished rank.
But say it was upon our tribe bestowed,
Gift of the Lord. How was selection made?
Methinks that we have chiefs, far abler men
Than Aaron, Moses' brother, to receive
Such exaltation; yea, such sacred work.
Doth Levi deem it right that one should choose,
Not by the vote of all, but by his will,
Aaron, High Priest of God in Israël?"
To him they said, "O Korah! prince renowned!
The priesthood lies with Reuben, eldest-born,
His ancient right. Not so, should Levi choose
'Bove all his princes him who failed to keep
Israël in obedience firm short while,
As Moses stayed on Sina's awful hill?
If such the course by which hath been bestowed
This second rank, lo, Levi deems it meet
With Reuben to take counsel, thus to stay
Selections made not by our 'customed rule."
Their words pleased Korah well; he thus replied:
"O chiefs! so far our minds agree, and this my wish.

Although of right the leadership belongs
To Reuben, yet as Moses hath advanced
Good claim thereto, ye all should let him wield,
As given of God, the power to it attached.
But more than this, he may not further seek
To' exalt his kin as princes over all.
O Levi! choose what chiefs from us shall go,
And unto Reuben tell our anxious thoughts."
"Nay, Korah, go thyself," one interposed;
"Speak thou for us, and we will follow thee!
Thou art more excellent; thou didst discern
The' injustice done; therefore 'tis thine to lead;
We can but follow where thy forethought leads."

So had Sedition's tongue beguiled one tribe,
And soon she, artful, gained three powerful chiefs,
The first in birth of all the first-born's strength.
These all in pride's forgetfulness disdained
By Moses to be led, and unto him,
As he with Aaron stood, suspecting not
Their evil wrong, these rebel thoughts made known:
"Moses and Aaron, twain of Amram sprung,
Wherefore have ye exalted thus yourselves
Above the congregation of the Lord,

Which of a truth is holy every whit,
While thus He hath vouchsafed to dwell therein?
What meaneth, then, this height, this love of power?
Are ye our princes? Lo, all power is yours!
Yet each is, like unto yourselves, approved
Of Him, whose love called Jacob Israël.
Why then doth Moses rule, and Aaron tread
The sacred courts as great High Priest of God?"
Then on the ground God's servants fell, in sign
They claimed no excellence; and Moses said:

"O Korah! thou, and each with thee conjoined,
Might take this honour coveted, as fit
From rank and wealth to rule in Israël,
Had not the Lord our God Himself decreed
Its burden unto me. Yea, Aaron's feet,
Not of his own approval, tread those courts
As the High Priest of God amongst your tribes.
It was the Lord who bade me consecrate
Him thereunto. Nor rule I of myself.
O Israël! it is the Lord who rules
Your thousands. He will on the morrow show
Whom He hath chosen, whom He doth esteem

As holy unto Him, whom He will bid
Approach more nigh! But that He may reveal
His wisdom's choice, let each hereunto bring
A censer, with its burning incense full,
An offering to the Lord. Let it be so,
The' approved of God, let him be holy deemed!
O Levi's sons, have ye not overpassed?
Why question ye the Lord? O Korah, hear!
Was that a small bequest or favour slight,
When He, the God of Israël, there chose
And set apart unto Himself your tribe?
Yea, brought it so far nigh, that ye now serve
Him in the Sanctuary, and therein stand
His ministers in Israël. What now?
So favoured of the Lord, do ye demand
Of Him the priesthood too? Ye thus rebel
Against your God! ye murmur not 'gainst us!"

So he, till morning, calmed the princes, chiefs
Confederate, and stilled dread Murmur's voice,
Which rose anon from the vast crowd, beguiled,
Who waited now for sacrifice and rite
To hear Heaven speak, and see Confusion seize
The Child of Falsehood, truth confirmed anew.

Gone is the night, the sacrifice is bound,
And Israël is met before his God!
Save Dathan and Abiram; these, not there,
Abide the issue, purposing to wrest
From Moses power, if Korah be approved;
And to the courteous messengers who bid
Them come, reply, "To him, your sender, say
We will not come! Dost thou esteem it light
Thus to have brought us from a land of streams
Of milk and honey to the Wilderness,
Yet would be altogether prince o'er us?
Thou hast not brought us unto such a land,
Nor heritage of vineyards, pasture fields!
What! wilt thou blind our eyes? We will not come!"

Such message heard, Moses was very wroth;
For Meekness felt sad Sorrow's pang, and Grief
Poured forth her prayer; because of Falsehood cried
Not unto Mercy, but on Justice called,
To sorely punish those who slandered God,
And blot their deep transgression wholly out.
So spake her voice: "Haste! separate yourselves
From the assembly! Lo, I will consume,
E'en in a breath, the people who have sinned!"

Then on their faces fell the prophet, priest,
And stayed that fiercer flood; and Moses went
Unto the chiefs of Reuben, who had sought
Of pride and folly its loud angry flow.
For Heaven's obedience left, and gratitude
Forsook, what else remained for Israël
But woe, destruction, tears, despair, and death?

Moses unto rebellious Reuben led
The fearing people, and the erring tribe
Forewarnèd thus: "Depart! Forsake your tents,
I pray ye, where the wicked dwell! Oh, touch
No thing of theirs, lest in their sin ye die!
Here shall ye know that not of mine own will
Have I done aught; but as the Lord hath bid,
So have I done! If by the death of all
These men shall die, I am not sent of God!
But if the Lord create a marvel new,
And Earth opes her closed mouth, and takes them down,
Them and their followers, swiftly to the pit,
Then have these men provoked the Lord their God."

Scarce had the words, denouncing vengeance, ceased,
When opening wide, a horrid chasm rent

The ground, which trembled fearfully, and shook
Its rebel burden off; cast it to depths
Of dark oblivion, agony, and woe;
As shrieking loud, at their dread end aghast,
The princes sank, wives, children, retinue,
Into the caverns of the opened earth,
Who with terrific crash closed o'er again,
Her mouth refusing answer of their fate;
As Israël in terror fled, fear-struck,
Lest retributive Vengeance should demand
More culprits as her due. Not Moses thus;
He, conscious of protecting Mercy, turned
Wherefrom Heaven's justice smote, and sorrowing bade,
"Commence ye now this morning's sacrifice."

Aaron, High Priest, the patient victim slew,
And cried, "Come ye, my sons, priests of the Lord!
Refill your censers! Let the holy cloud,
Ascending, plead before the Mercy-seat
Forgiveness of our sins!" Then in the court,
All through the outer nave, before the veil,
Went up that pleading cloud! Korah drew nigh;
Twelve score and ten of Levi's tribe approached,
And living coals from off the altar took,

Their censers lit; then slow an incense cloud
Went up in accusation, not in love,
And crept unto the veil. Thence issued forth
The cherub's living sword, a stream of fire,
And slew the leader and the led. Dread voice
Of the man-face, their censers take, and gird
The altar with accusers of their souls.

O wisdom of Archangel! fallen! lost!
Israël weeps one night, imputes the stroke
Of Justice unto Intercession's cry
Before the altar, and at morning saith,
Oh, wrong of Satan taught! to Moses thus:
"Behold, ye have killed the people of the Lord!
Why pray ye thus, beseeching Him to slay?"
But so imputing, O ye powers of Heaven!
Their words are stayed. In wonder every eye
Beholds the covering cloud of glory rest
Upon God's House. Thereto the prophet, priest,
In haste proceed, fall down before the Lord,
And with great pleading pled, scarce Mercy find.
For Ire hath burst the bounds, Wrath hath gone forth,
And Death upholds the Holiness of God.

Yet Prayer, e'en there, hath power, as Aaron takes
His censer to the altar, fills it full
With living coals, and where the angel slays,
There goes he forth 'midst dying and the dead;
And in the incense veiled pours forth his prayer:
"O Lord, most just! O Lord, most merciful!
Most pure, most holy God! Judge of the Earth!
Hear from Thy Mercy-seat! Regard the blood
Of victim on Thine altar slain for sin!
Bid Justice stay her sword, Israël's death!"
Well pleased, God's angel sees the incense cloud,
O'erveils therein his spirit-form, and sheathes
His anger-sword. But the all-living word
Doth write near fifteen thousand slain that morn,
Who had ascribed unholiness to God.
But oh, Thou Love! unasked, unsought, He gave
To Israël a sign that Aaron stood
Anointed priest, elected, called of Him.

Before the sacrifice at evening stand
All Israël, by their twelve tribes arranged;
And from each tribe a prince, awe-girt, draws nigh
Unto the veil, and gives a simple rod
O'ermarked with his own name, as for his tribe,

To Moses. But for Levi Aaron gives
The sceptre-rod, and all within the veil,
Before the witness, are of Moses laid
As there he prays, "O Lord! sole source of life
And wisdom! of Thy mercy show Thy will
Hereon, that Israël may know Thy priest!"

Again the morning sacrifice hath come,
The victim dies, and incense wreaths ascend
Before the veil. Thereto the princes draw
Somewhat more nigh. But Moses enters in
The Holy of Holies; thence he issues forth
With many rods, and lo, the princes choose
Each one his own, save Levi, who hath none,
For Moses keeps an almond-branch whose buds
And blossoms bear sweet witness to the Lord,
His choice approved; whilst their small leaves close o'er
The name inscribed, "Aaron, High Priest of God,"
Which Aaron 'neath those blushing leaflets reads
As draws he nigh. Then all the princes see
And yield him honour, taste the ripening fruit;
And Moses takes the budding staff once more
Within the veil. Henceforth laid there, a voice

Before the Mercy-seat, Rebellion hushed,
Great title deed of Aaron's priestly house.

But now in Conscience' halls was heard the voice
Of God, as Israël, repentant, cried,
"Behold, we die! we perish! all do perish!
Whoso approacheth to the Holy Place
Shall die. Shall we with dying be consumed?"
Then Moses said, "Hearken, O Israël!
The Lord your God, He is an holy God!
His ways are just, His will unchangeable!
With Him is perfect Love and Goodness joined!
Yet when He hears your secret murmuring,
Or ripe rebellion, then His wrath awakes.
His Goodness and His Holiness both plead
For your rejection, and the putting forth
Of His strong arm, that Death may purge the Earth
Of such foul blot, which casts aside His love.
Yet wrathful, still He longs for your return,
And seeks your sorrow's voice to heal its wounds.
Return ye then to Him! Trust ye His love!
Obedient and contented, tread the road
His wisdom shall reveal! Then will He keep
Destruction from your tribes, that they in strength

Of many numbers strong, may drive all foes
Before them who dispute your heritage.
Fear ye the Lord! He is your Shield, your Hope,
And will with mercy compass you around."

Encouraged thus, and by obedience led,
They in their wanderings wandered, dying died,
For eight-and-thirty years; hopeful inheritors,
Who faithful were, of future love, not wrath.

BOOK IX.

THIRST—THE ROCK—MOSES AND AARON—EDOM—AARON'S DEATH — ARAD — SERPENTS — SIHON — BALAAM — MORNING HYMN— MIDIAN—THE TWO TRIBES.

NIGH forty years have flown since first we saw
The wanderings began. No hand hath rent
Oblivion's pendent veil; no ray hath pierced
The darkened cloud, wherein, enfolded still,
They lie unknown; and so Obedience walks
Oft with Contentment, met in path obscure,
As if unseen, uncared for of her God,
Conscious that she receives her merit past
Of goodness from His hand, who doth direct
In wisdom's ways her feet invisibly.

Near Kadesh hath all Israël encamped,
No more by Miriam's song enraptured there;
For she is dead, and the great hills have wept

In grief and lamentation o'er her death.
Long while their sojourn; water faileth them,
And thirsty people to God's Prophet weep.
He hath been bid to order gushing streams
Flow forth from Nature's womb, concealed in rocks,
Obedient to a mortal yielding praise,
And bearing witness to Jehovah's power.
Their thousands now in expectation stand
Assembled near a fissured rock, whose face
In one vast column breaks the plain's extent;
And Aaron, priest of God, bears thither forth
The sceptre-rod. This Moses takes. Alas!
His spirit is provoked, by sorrow torn;
His faith, though true, hath waned in that long night,
Devoid of sign or voice of God vouchsafed
To Israël. He saith, "O rebels, hear!
Must we fetch water from this rock for you?"
Then lifts the sceptre-rod, and therewith smites
Two times the rock. Then for His servant's voice
God bids its fountains open; straight outpours
The volumed water, and the people drink.

But while these freely of that blessing take,
Lo! Justice speaks in judgment to the two

Whose knowledge was above their brethren blessed;
Whose faith had failed; who had not sanctified
God in the sight of Israël; wherefore
They should not lead the people to the land
Which He had given them. Condemn them not,
Ye children of the day, when shadow dims
No more the radiant glow of heaven's clear light!
For eight-and-thirty years, upheld by Faith,
But not by vision of the Lord, or sign,
Or sound, had they now lived. Deep was their grief,
Yet Meekness heard the sentence of their Judge.
They knew their crime, which was not Folly's rush;
But more the carrying of the foot too nigh
The' uneven earth, o'er which they stumbling fell.
But swift the Guardian's voice awoke their sense
Of guilt; and Sorrow whispered, He was just,
As sought they His forgiveness, not that clouds
Should hide them from His Presence; for though Hope
Had dearly loved, yet far, exceeding far
O'er Canaan's land, their heart had winged its flight.
And lo, the Infinitude of Mercy saw
Contrition grasp the strength of Love, and heard
Their prayer, though still Eternal Justice bade,
For others' sake, their exile be unchanged.

Meanwhile, with deepening flood, the water pours
Forth from the rock, and to its freshness run
The bleating sheep and lowing beast to slake
Their thirst. Nor pause they at the shallow edge,
But haste into the middle stream, and lie
In its deep currents glad, whilst kneeling boys
And girls with parchèd feverish lips stoop down
In stiller depths; and men and women praise,
There drinking of its flood, the Lord their God.

And thus with water fed, Israël waits
The princes sent on embassage of peace
To Esau's sons, that they, for kindred's sake,
May pass as quiet travellers through their land.
At length they come; also ambassadors
From Seir, the Mountain of the Strong, who thus
Their Prince's words of stern denial speak.
Thus Edom saith: "Thou shalt not pass by me,
Lest I come out against thee with the sword."
Then Moses said: "Wherein is Edom's harm,
That Israël may not pass through the land?
We ask no more! We ask not food, nor leave
To quit the King's highway! And if our beasts
Shall of thy waters drink, then will we give

Due recompense; we but request of thee
To let our tribes pass through your land in peace."
They yet replied: "To thee our speech is thus:
Surely thou shalt not go! For Edom saith,
'I have refused; and therefore will resist,
E'en by my sword, the passage of your tribes!'"
This said, they, gathering up their vestments, sought
Permission to depart, and straightway left
The camp of Israël.

Forbidden thus,
Their armies skirting close the border went
From Kadesh unto Hor; and Edom, clad
For warfare, watched in fear their travelling.
And God's commandment kept the weapons sheathed
Which Jacob's children else had fiercely drawn
Against the sons to Elder Esau given.
So fear of Heaven and Earth from battle kept
The blessèd, and rejected kindred tribes,
Till Hor's grim mountain saw Israël 'camped.

O Voice of God! How saddened now my song!
Because of sin, Thy sentence is gone forth!
For others' sake, Aaron, Thy priest, must die!

He, with Thy prophet, climbs in sight of all
Hor's Mount, which lone in grandeur riseth, scorns
The nether vale, and clothes itself in cloud;
And silent, sad, obedient by their side
Walks Eleazar, future priest of God;
While Elders gaze from plains more distant laid,
Where Israël doth weep. The clouds are nigh;
Therein they enter, and henceforth no more
Shall Israël behold their first High Priest.
The peak is gained, and there the three fall down
Prostrate before the Lord, to whom one prays,
And two for him: "O Thou, the Strong One! aid,
Forgive, make pure! ere Thy great angel, Death,
Holds this my hand!" And now their spirits know,
In consciousness of love, that Prayer's voice
Is heard; that Others are there nigh. Such sign
Perceived, they rise, and lo! God's prophet takes
The' anointed robes of righteousness and praise
Off Aaron, priest, and Eleazar clothes therewith.
Then all once more adore the Lord their God,
Who calls one to Himself, and consecrates
The son unto his father's place, High Priest.
And two arising from their worship leave
Those Others, watchers on Hor's Mount, as come

The mourners unto Aaron's burial.
And Israël for thirty days mourned o'er
The saint of God, lone, resting in his tomb.

But such long days of sorrow past, the cloud,
Proceeding onwards, led by Arad's realm
The wanderers' march; where that proud monarch bade
His forces gather nigh, and sudden fell
On the encumbered host, its rearward smote.
For God permitted not Israël's sword
To turn and smite him to his death, but wrote
His end in retributive vengeance thus:
"Despair! destruction! desolation! death!"
And still round Edom brought, 'midst frowning rocks,
Israël onwards tow'rds their journey's hope.

This arduous path, enclosed by rended hills
And gloomy vales, discouraged oft the host
Which toiled along its way. Thus Murmur woke,
Who unto Moses went, of the rough way
Complained, and cried, "Are we brought forth to death?
A death from hunger, since our spirits loathe
This lightsome bread?" Then Vengeance heard, and
bade

Fierce venomed serpents issue forth from rocks,
Uprear their fire-bound heads, and wildly glare
With wrathful eye, entwine their dreadful coils
Round men transfixed, since first their visions met
The conscious serpent gaze. These, fearless, struck
Their victims, and else absent Death brought near.
And dying Israël beneath the rod
Of chastisement wept sore, confessed his sin,
His doubt of heavenly guidance, food, and love;
And sorrowing, went to Moses, prayed his prayer,
Entreatal with the Lord to pity them.
Then Moses, mediator for the host,
Prayed unto God, and found acceptance there,
As Calvary's forethrown shadow reached the cry,
That woke the wilderness. For there, God-bid,
He made their plague's similitude in brass;
And raised upon two poles, set crossways, thus
Its whole great weight to bear, the serpent-form,
That all who looked thereto, faith-saved, might live,
Go free from death; though halting, breathing spake,
That Life's Despoiler's hand was on the heart
Fluttering with its immortal guest's depart.

High on its cross, before the House of God

The Heaven-sent sign was raised, where all might see.
Swift through the camp the Levites' shout proclaimed:
" Hereunto look, ye bitten ones! Be healed!
Praise ye the Lord! trust ye His power, this day
Here magnified for you!" Then thousands heard,
And faithful, to the emblem turned their gaze,
And prayed the Strength of Israel forgive
Their sinful doubt of His unfailing love,
Unerring wisdom, guiding still their way
In safety's path, though foes were manifold.

The bitten mother weeps o'er her sick child,
Dying herself, yet grieving o'er it more.
But ah! why sparkles thus her eye? What sound
Of comfort bids Despair away? The voice
Proclaiming life hath spoken! She hath heard!
Affection's plea compels her faith! Death flies!
She is saved! and lulls to sleep her child, now well.
A father o'er his stricken first-born grieves,
His pride, his joy; Death's hue shed o'er the face
Of longing love reclining in his arms.
But hark! the silver trumpet sounds! He hears
The message borne. Then for the father's sake,
The son revives; gazeth with one last hope

Of mercy found, by heavenly strength endowed.
But see the anguish on that sister's face,
As with a cry of agony doth sink,
Beneath the cold of death the younger-born;
See that full tear, love's trickling, on her cheek,
And gently falling on its saddened birth,
As if sweet sympathy might check the speed
Of that increasing chill, bespeaking Death
There hovering nigh. Behold affection's strength!
The elder beareth forth from death to life
The younger in her arms, and breathes a prayer
Of gratitude, as those pale lips do smile
In answering love unto their sister's look.

But hark! What sound? It is the thousand youth
Of Israël, who now encouraged slay
The venomed serpents. Night befalls them so,
And morning finds their terror slain or gone.
Then they at Punon rest, till by their strength
Made strong, they move through Moab; thence they send
To Sihon, king of Heshbon, words of peace,
Demanding leave to pass on his highway,
But are refused. For Sihon gathers strength,

Prepares for war, and comes to make onslaught
On Israël. But ere his forces break
Into the wilderness, behold, God's voice
To Moses saith, "Arise! Cross Arnon's flood!
I give thee Sihon, Heshbon's king, his land,
And all his wealth! Begin! Possess it now!
Contend with him! I will commence, this day,
To put the dread of thee and fear of thee
Upon the nations. They shall hear report
Of thee, and fear; and be in anguish cast!"
Then ere before the witness Moses spake
His gratitude, the silver trump proclaimed,
"The Lord, our cloud-enveloped God, doth lead!"
Then Jacob rose to conquer and to slay.

Then rued the Amorite, at Jahaz met
With his avenger, hasting tow'rds his face.
Fierce raged the strife! Loud rose the captain's call!
"Fight, brave men, fight!" and bravely fought they there
For victory. Pale Horror saw, and shook
Their terror off his wings, as rose the wind
Its moans, resounding ruin, battles lost.
All turned affright, nor knew at what they fled.

The foremost broken, through the rearmost broke;
And swift the panic cried, "Speed, speed ye on!
The battle's lost! The sword is nigh! Stay not!
Hark! there his foot pursues to right, to left!
Haste on!" And on they rushed; their terror theirs.
Ten thousand swords seemed gleaming in their rear.
Thus Sihon fell; his kingdom passed away.
Nor could the giant Og, and threescore towns
Wall-girt, obedient to his rule, win back
The kingdom lost; but shared with him like fate
At Edrei met. Yea, Jacob's children ruled
From Arnon's stream to Hermon's Mount, and stayed
In Moab's plains ere they o'er Jordan passed.

Meanwhile had Balak, Moab's king, received
Report, "Israël overruns all lands;
His sword lays waste, destroys, till he returns
A victor, then to sow the fields anew,
And reap the fruit of peace." Thereat dismayed,
He planned an embassage with Moab's chiefs
To Beor's prophet-son, far spread in fame,
Who cursed, or blessed, and Power heard his voice.
A worshipper of God, he spake His word
Revealed in vision-answer to the cry

Of prayer, entreating wisdom which he made.
He dwelt in Pethor, near Euphrates' flood,
And thither, laden with rewards of gold
And silver, cloth and spice, the nobles went,
And told their earnest mission thus: "O son
Of Beor! unto whom the heavens give ear,
We, sent by Balak, son of Zippor, beg
Thy presence, honouring us in journey hence
To Moab's hills. Let now thy hand accept
Of these few gifts, his carefulness would urge
Upon our lord, as tokens of regard.
Behold! from Ægypt issuing forth, there comes
A nation, numerous, whose camp o'erspreads
The earth. Come therefore now, we pray thee, curse
Their tribes! else powerful beyond attempt.
For blessed, we may prevail 'gainst them accursed
Of thee; and from our borders drive their hosts."
The prophet said: "Your servant may not stir
Herefrom but as the Lord his God shall bid.
Bide ye the night, and in the morning know
The pleasure of the Lord." There they abode;
And whilst they slept, God asked the prophet thus:
"Who are these men with thee?" Then Balaam told
The Lord what Balak, king of Moab, sought;

And so was bid: "Thou shalt not go with them!
Thou shalt not curse the people! They are blessed!"
Then early in the morning Balaam rose,
And to the princes said, "Your servant stays
In his poor house. Behold! the Lord forbids
My journeying with you; but to your king
Say, Balaam saith, 'Oppose them not, but send
Them words of peace, for surely they are blessed.'"

"The Prophet will not come!" This Balak heard.
Then one full day, amazed, divined no cause
Therefor: then deemed his mean, poor gifts kept back,
Lone in those hills, that Eastern solitude,
The prophet, knowing not he worshipped God,
Unseen, Almighty; hence, as for a king,
He chose him costlier gifts, entrusted them
To chiefs more princely yet than those returned,
And sent a second embassage, if so to bring
From Aram's realm the curser of his foes.
These went, and unto Balaam said, "O sage,
Whose lore can change the' else changeless dread decrees
Of gods, we come to thee, petitioners of help,
From Balak, Zippor's son, of Moab king.
He hath sent us, his princes most esteemed,

Ambassadors to thee, whom thus he prays:
'Receive these gifts, selected of mine hand.
Forgive my former messengers; exalt
Thy servant, who with Midian chiefs this day
Confederate, desires to see thy face.
Let nothing now, I pray thee, hinder thee;
But come, and I will greatly honour thee;
Also will do whate'er thy mouth shall bid,
Count it my burden; only curse me these!'"

Balaam made answer: "O most noble chiefs!
Behold! I have no power to go or stay;
But as the Lord shall bid, so must I do.
His seal is on my mouth. If Balak filled
His house with silver and with gold, then gave
It me, the servant of the Lord, I dared
Not say more than His word; nor add, nor take
Therefrom. Yet if ye will abide this night
In my poor house, I will present your need
Before the Lord, if so He tell me more."

Thus spake the prophet, hearkening unto Faith,
Not in her fulness; else why bade he stay,
But for their journey's rest, those messengers?

Why gave he hope? He knew the' unchanging God!
What concord then? These came to curse! He
blessed!
Loved Balaam pride? Had Avarice assailed,
And found his armour weak? Speak ye who know!
But follower of truth, essential truth,
Regard his end, and to the' arch-foe oppose
The Spirit's sword. True faith, resistant, heals
Thy wounds, and to restored obedience leads.

The princes stayed. And in the long dark night
God Balaam called; his trial spake: "Balaam!
If these men come to call thee, rise and go!
But yet the word which I shall say to thee,
That shalt thou do." But Beor's son arose
With opening day, not tarrying for the sign;
And with the princes went. But Mercy strove,
And angel-swords the erring servant warned,
Dividing, if 'twere possible, the road
Of his destruction, ere his foot o'erleapt
The limit known to the Eternal Love.
For, travelling on an ass, he keeps not speed
With Moab's king-like train, now journeying back,
Glad harbingers of good, with him they sought.

Behold! a mighty angel stands unseen
Of mortal gaze. His fiery sword defends
The causeway's track. Its mission instant death,
Should flesh and blood come nigh. He draws aside;
The princes pass the unsuspected death.
His message knows not them. He closeth swift
The road, and gleams a flaming sword across
Its narrowness. The prophet onward comes,
Nor sees the vision; but his beast perceives
The lifted flaming sword! As deaf, she heeds
Not Balaam's voice; but, seeking safety, springs
Into the wayside fields, her master saves,
As flies the angel, who, departing, stands
(For Mercy still her intercession pleads)
Where walls shut in the road; if there to stay
The further progress tow'rds eternal night
Of one who oft had heard his loved One speak.
Again the prophet heedlessly draws nigh.
Again the sword supernal is revealed
Unto the ass. She sees, and frightened, thrusts
Herself, her lord, with violence 'gainst the wall;
If it may yield, and save her from the blow
Of that descending flame, bespeaking death,
Should she within returning stroke be found.

Once more she saves her lord, who, knowing not
Of his lost life, smites her with many strokes.
Again the angel riseth, and doth stand
Where all escape seems closed, as Balaam comes,
Still blinded to the vision wonted seen
While sweet contentment blessed his poverty.
Once more his patient ass perceives, and falls
Submissive, venturing not a further step,
If she may stay the ebbing tide of life.
Then bursts the prophet's anger pitiless
On her, as with repeated blows he smites
His thrice-proved shield, but not uncensured smites;
For lo! his rage, akin to madness, hears
Unterrified a human voice address
Him from her else mute mouth. Unterrified!
For reason lost, man fears no creature, knows
No dread but man's, or that Great Power who bids
His wandering darkness cease. Thus saith the ass:
"What have I done to thee, that thou hast struck
Me these three times?" Then Balaam answered her,
"Hast thou not mocked me? Would that now a sword
Were in mine hand, that I might kill thee here!"
The ass replied, "Am I not thine? Oh, speak!
Hast thou not on me ridden till this day?

When have I wonted fallen under thee?"
He answered, "Nay." And as Repentance wakes,
With Sorrow's voice entreating him go back,
The darkness leaves his eye, and, standing there,
He sees the Angel of the Lord, whose sword,
Whose thoughtful brow reproves his anger shown.
Then Balaam falls unto the ground, and lays
His face thereon, and for forbearance pleads,
As saith the Angel, "Wherefore hast thou struck
Three times thine ass? Behold! I issued forth
To stand against thee, since thy way doth seem
Perverse to me. Three times thine ass perceived
Me standing in the way, and turned aside,
Else thou wert slain, and she were saved alive."
Then prayed the prophet: "Let me now return."
But no. Such trial sought, he must withstand
Temptation's flame. He had for avarice left
His faith-enshielded cot, when Love forbade.
Hence free obedience must be sin's reproof,
As he shall bless, and Heaven shall cast aside
The wealth bestowed, had curses won esteem.

So warned, he journeyed many days, and oft
In pensive mood would ask, "Whence came that race

Whom Balak sought to curse? Why were they
blessed?"
And as the dimness from his vision fled,
More nighly came the oath-bound covenant
Of Abraham unto the prophet's eye,
And shamed him, as he knew God's word fulfilled,
And darkly saw the Blessing of the Earth.
And passing thus o'er Moab's mountain, lo!
Joy filled his breast, as from afar was heard
Jehovah's praise, whilst clouds of incense spake
The morning sacrifice. Yea, there the wind,
His strengthener for trial, breathed these words:

"Eternal God! Almighty King of Heaven!
Whose power sustains the earth, the sea! who spake,
And lo! creation at Thy word began!
Though all unworthy, now we humbly seek
To praise Thy name, O God! Thou hast vouchsafed
Thyself to lead Thy people, as a flock
By shepherd's staff is led to pastures good.
Therefore we praise Thee! Yea, we glorify
Thee in the morning sacrifice! and say,
'Grateful, O Lord! grateful Thy servants are
For sleep! All night Thou in Thy presence kept

Our lives; the terror of Thy holiness,
Thy righteousness, and truth, hath driven away
The nations as the chaff before our face.
Accept our praise, and hasten Thou Thy word,
And Earth's submission to Thy love and truth.'"

"The prophet comes!" Full gladly Balak heard;
Then hastening met him drawing nigh, and said,
"O sage! mysterious in thy knowledge, deign
To answer our too great solicitude.
Why cam'st thou not when my first message reached
Thy mountain home? What lacked, I pray thee tell?
Behold! I looked for thee, and was distressed,
When those my messengers returned, and brake
My hope. Yet now I see thy face with joy,
And pray thee with thy power help urgent need
Which hath brought thee from far." Balaam replied,
"O Balak, king of Moab! I have come
At thy request. But the same word I said
When those thy messengers made known thy wish
To me at rest, far hence in mountain home,
Desiring not thy silver or thy gold,
That now I say to thee. I have no power
To curse or bless; nor can my mouth destroy;

But as the Lord instructeth, so I speak."
Then Balak, answering, said, " O greatly wise!
I know not yet the worship of thy God.
But come with me, and I will offer up
Such sacrifice as thou shalt order me
For His propitiation, that His voice
May tell of good, and not mine evil speak."
To him now Balaam said, "I go with thee,
And sacrifice for thine unworthiness
And mine will offer, if perchance His Grace
May plead, and bid His servant's mouth to bless
Thee in distress. But for thy prayer, I know
That Israël is blessed; for so revealed
God's holy voice, ere yet had left the chiefs
Whom thou first sent to bid me leave mine home."

Then went the 'twain where Moab's princes stayed
With Midian chiefs their coming, ere they strove
To hurl the nations born to Jacob back
From Jordan to the Wilderness. Therefrom
The seer's gaze beheld Israël 'camped
Beneath the mountain, spread o'er the wide plain
Far as the eye could reach, ere they might cross
The flood of separation from their rest.

As Balaam gazed, Balak besought him, "Curse
Me these! Inquire of God!" Then Beor's son
Made sacrifice, lest sudden wrath should burst
On Moab; so inquiring of the Lord
What unto Him seemed good. This done, he blessed
The increase born to Abraham, and moved
As if his work were o'er; but ah! he fails!
He leaveth not! nor loathes suggestion foul
Of tempter yet to curse the nation blessed.
He mounts another height; with Balak makes
Another sacrifice, and blesses then
With greater blessings still Israël's host;
And falls, as no soul-voice beseecheth help;
Else had he stood, and not the Spirit grieved,
When from another rock once more arose
The smoke of sacrifice. But Mercy saw,
And twofold measure of her joy infused
Into his spirit, blessing as she blessed
The people of her love, whom Balak longed
To see accursed, and disappointed bade
The servant of the Lord, "Depart in haste!
Thou art kept back from honour by the Lord!"
Then Balaam, freed from mortal cloud, replied
As from his trance, and opened out the course

Of time, and to the wondering monarch told
Israël's glory, and the Saviour come
For man; and then, from trance released, went back
To Aram's land. But journeying thus, he grieved
For the lost wealth; and so, when Midia sought
His aid, he listed Evil's voice, gave ear,
And planned destructive ruin to the blessed.
For Israël remained in Moab's sight
Long while; and Midia, taught of Balaam, found
His camp unkept, as her fair maidens met
The youth of Jacob, and with soft, bright eyes
Of love, and gentle voice, begged listing ears,
"Obey ye now our gods!" and so beguiled,
Of weakness fooled, Israël fell, and wrought
Abomination in the sight of God;
For whom, the voice of Moses pleading, prayed
Their swift return, ere His deep depths of grief
Should send rejection's curse, destroying them:

"O sons of Israël! cast down and lost!
If so your footsteps leave the light of Heaven
O'er your obedience shed, oh, hear me now!
Return, I pray ye, to that holy law,
The voice of God, which keeps you in His love,

Whilst He preserves you from surrounding foes.
Whence have ye come ? What have your lives not seen?
Hath He not clothed and fed for forty years
Your tribes, as day by day ye woke from sleep,
And saw your bread as snow upon the ground ?
Have not your fathers died for unbelief,
Refusing love ? What! would ye choose their end,
Or drink their cup, when ye may bless the earth,
As from your heritage shall spread His truth,
And kings shall bow submissive to your sway ?
Repent, O Israël ! repent, and purge
This sin from you. For Wrath e'en now awakes ;
And lo ! consuming fire will fiercely burn,
And vindicate the Lord's rejected love."
He ended, and behold great Wrath awoke,
As Zimri, son of Salu, thus replied :

" Moses ! wherefore restrainest thou our youth ?
Or why dost thou withhold from Bravery
Her due ? Are not the fairest hers by right
Of war ? What harm if Midia's daughters come
And dwell with us ? Wherein is our dread crime,
If they, of other faith, bring household gods,
And we to please them offer sacrifice

To that which may be wood, but which their words
Induce belief are something more than man ?
They speak of gifts received ! we have received !
What more ? Thy speech and theirs are equal now !
We dread the wrath of Heaven ! they dread it too !
And therefore pay its thronèd ones their rites.
So Cozbi, fairest daughter born to Zur,
Doth her devoted Zimri teach. Moses,
I heed her voice ; and go, if need may be,
To worship as she bids. She waits me now.
I love her smile, assert my freedom's claim,
And leave you to incline, if such your power,
The hearts of Israël unto your faith."

Thus bold he spake, and of the plague unscathed
Passed out ; with Cozbi sought his tent, well pleased
That she approving smiled. But Vengeance frowned,
And drew her tempered sword, prepared that day,
When Phinehas, son of Eleazar, rose,
As burnt the fire of jealousy for God,
His loved Jehovah, fiercely in his breast,
Not to be quenched, ere it had stilled the tongue
Of the blasphemer. Lo ! he seized the dart
Of vengeance, and went out 'fore Israël,

And raised the door of Zimri's tent, unbid,
Where Justice entered on his brow, and spake
Their sentence, as with one swift blow he sent
The messenger of death upon the cords
Of Zimri's and of Cozbi's lives. Thus Wrath
Atonement made, that Mercy's voice might plead.
But ere such love prevailed, a thousand score
And twoscore hundred paid the debt of sin,
That sin which false religion calls no crime;
But whose reproval then was righteousness
To its reprover given, as he received
God's Covenant of Peace, and priesthood, sealed
For ever 'midst his holy seed to dwell.

Transgression stayed, Moses renumbered all
Of Israël, and found but two alive,
Caleb and Joshua, who, now forty years
Gone by, had from the border turned, despising truth;
But she established, on the tempters fell
The' Avenger of their guilt, as from each tribe,
Ten hundred swords destroying Midia went.
Then died her sons, and God's last prophet reaped
His wages, death. And all their numbers safe,
Twelve thousand brought sad Sorrow's weeping train

Of captives, with their flocks, and herds, and gold,
Back to the camp, where the great spoil was shared
By those who fought, and those who stayed behind.
But for the Lord, Chief Captain, was assigned
The fairest of the whole. Also was laid
At Moses' feet an offering for God's house,
Atonement made by the twelve thousand saved,
When battle sent destruction on their foes.

But the rich pasture won, well pleased the eyes
Of Gad and Reuben, herdsmen of the host.
These came to Moses with petition, said:
"O Ruler of the hosts of Israël!
Revealer of the Lord, to whom His will
Is known! behold, this land appeareth good
Unto thy servants; for its pastures feed
The herds, wherewith they have been blessed.
If now we have found grace, enjoin us rest
In these fair plains; and share our heritage
In Canaan 'midst our many brethren tribes."

Moses replied: "O sons to Reuben born!
O ye, the seed of Gad! Manasseh's sons!
Whence is this counsel? Would ye thus betray

Your brethren unto wrath? Do ye not err,
Refusing thus the mission of the Lord
Upon your shoulders placed? Do ye not know
How with report of evil, spies deterred
Your fathers from such work, discouraged them,
Though on the border, anxious to go in,
Thus woke the anger of the Lord, which drave
Them back from Canaan, through the Wilderness,
Where wandering died all those of twenty years
And more, who had refused His heritage?
Are ye not following them? Do ye not now
Discourage Israël? What if that wrath
Again should wake, and drive these living back
To death, once saved by Love? The Lord may lead
This mighty host away, and cast it off
From His inheritance, His promised good."

To him the tribes confederate replied:
"O Moses! thou hast been our eyes, our feet,
For thou hast led us these long forty years,
As God hath bid. Let now thy servants tell
Thee all their mind. We seek not thus to leave
Our brethren, crossing Jordan's stream. And far
Be it from us to give discouragement.

In very truth, we will o'er Jordan cross
Before all Israël, shouldst thou permit,
Each armed for war, and fighting for our God;
So would we stay, till Heaven shall give you rest.
But then we would return, and dwell herein.
Wherefore thy servants ask thee, 'Let us build
Towns in these plains, lest neighbouring foes should smite
Our wives, our children, while we are away.'"

Then Moses said: "If this ye do, and fail
Not of the oath before your Elders sworn,
But surely shall go armoured forth, and stand
Before the Lord, till He hath driven His foes
Far hence, then come, inherit ye these plains,
Not otherwise received, bestowed of God.
But if ye fail, behold, ye sin, and sin
Shall find you out. Receive ye all your thought;
Build towns, wherein your little ones may dwell;
And folds, wherein your herds may rest preserved
From man, or the wild beast, till your return.
O Eleazar, hear! O Joshua, hear!
O Elders, hear! Hear ye, O Israël!
O Reuben, Gad, Manasseh, swear

Upon the altar, and the sacrifice,
'We go before the Lord till He hath rest.'
O all ye witnesses, I charge ye, give
To these, returning from their oath performed,
And faithful found, fulfilment of their prayer!"

Meanwhile, Israël stayed his armies' feet
On Jordan's boundary flood till Heaven should bid
Them onward march, and entering Canaan, purge
The land from its iniquity and sin,
Whose voice had surged against the Mercy-seat,
And overborne Jehovah's endless love.

BOOK X.

INTRODUCTION—JOSHUA'S CHARGE—SONGS OF MOSES—ODE—ENCOURAGEMENT OF ISRAEL—FAREWELL—NEBO—ODE—DEATH OF MOSES.

My song is well-nigh done. The slave hath burst
His fetters, cast their links away, and left
The Wilderness. One verse alone remains.
Prepare, O man of God, prepare to die!
Tell Israël thy yet withholden words,
And say, "Farewell." An angel hath spread wide his wings
To carry thee. The trumpet hath been blown!
He issues forth! Ascend thy Path of Death!
Nay, rather, climb thee now the Hill of Life,
And gaze o'er Canaan's land, whose hope sustained
Thee long in exile; bade thy choice refuse
Thine heirship to the throne of Ægypt, feared
As winds to distant nations bore its name,
For learning famed, her mistress in the world.

O meekest man on Earth! for others die!
But Justice then shall give her hand to Love,
And with refusal grant thine asking more
Than when, alone, thou heard'st God's glory pass,
And trembledst with the greatness of His name.
Not unsupported, Aaron trode that path,
And entered the mid-vale 'tween life and life;
But thou alone must climb unto thy Love;
And thy loosed mantle shall on no man rest,
Till He, thy greater Prophecy, shall come,
And take Himself the government of all.

O Israël! 'neath Nebo's mountain stand!
Fill Moab's plains! Let not thy little ones
Be absent now, as day by day thy prince,
No longer slow in speech, but strong in word,
Tells all the mighty deeds thy fathers saw
In Ægypt done, and talks of Sina's Mount,
Then leads thee, in his story, to the land
Of Canaan twice, ere he doth say, "Farewell,"
And leaves thee for his greater Love, his God.

Ope wide, ye Gates of Refuge, for the blow
Too rash! Stop ye the stream of blood, and hide

The fugitive, while God's High Priest shall live
To plead forgiveness, stay the' avenger's foot!
Sing ye, three cities! Have not ye been called
Cities of Mercy, where the' accuser cried
For reparation, found his claim annulled,
As Grief confessed her deed, protection sought?
Praise ye the lawgiver, who made you thus
Stars of redemption, emblems of the light,
Whose rays have pierced the darkness of his law.

A hundred years and twenty have gone by
Since first unto his father it was said,
"A man-child hath been born." O Joshua! come
Before that hoary head! Beneath that hand,
Still strong in vigour, kneel! Thine orders hear!
The last which he, thy well-beloved, shall give;
Not crossing Jordan's flood, yet seeing all
The land which thou shalt conquer through his fear.

Eleazar! priest of God, draw nigh!
Stand thou before the veil! and standing so,
Draw it around thee, as God's prophet takes
Before the Mercy-seat him chosen now
As his successor, leader of the host;

Who once on Sina went, where Aaron's foot
Was stayed; who once abode before the Lord
Alone, and now, maybe, with Moses falls
Before the Mercy-seat, receives his charge.

Be strong; be not dismayed, O Joshua, now
That on thy shoulders falls so large a share
Of thy loved master's robe. Though he must go,
And though no more his voice shall counsel thee,
Yet thou art strong! The Lord shall lead thy foot,
And go before thy face; destroy thy foes.
He will not leave thee, nor forsake thy need,
Till all is done, and Canaan's sons lament
Thy coming, and their lost inheritance.

Go forth, O Joshua! in the darkness pray
Before the veil, as thou on Sina prayed.
The Lord will speak alone with Moses now,
And will not suffer thee to hear His voice
Give final sentence on His servant loved
For Meekness' sake, with whom He more than walked,
Who might have been unfound, as Enoch was,
But for our weakness, who hath surely heard
The angel Death fly very, very near,

But knows not his last flight. He hath been found
All faithful, and for him one work remains.
Thuoris saw a sleeping, weeping babe, and loved
But Israël must hear his song of praise,
Rebuke, and glory rise, ere he may die,
And there the cherub-voice instructs his soul.

Weep thou, O Israël; and weeping, sing
The song of Moses! Where thou art forewarned
Of thine approaching fall; as he doth weep
Because of this, while bidding thee farewell.
Yet praise thee now, and from the Universe
Call down thy witnesses of faith. Bid Earth
Hear thine uplifted voice; and from the clouds
And gentle rain, which feed the tender plant,
Call symbols of thine happiness and good,
Preserved of God, the Merciful and Just,
The Perfect-wise, the Powerful, thy Lord
Unchangeable, whose ways would judge thee still.

But weep! This gladness is not thine; 'tis Faith's,
Whom thou hast cast aside, and loosed her hand.
O foolish! thou hast blurred thine heavenly seal!
Ungrateful! left thy Father, not recalled

The many years wherein He made thee strong,
Though He had found thee strayed, lost in a wild
And lonely wilderness; then compassed thee
With love, kept as the apple of His eye:
As when an eagle stirreth up her nest,
Or fluttereth o'er her young, or spreads her wings
To carry them, so thou wert led of God.

Now triumph ye, repentant! For the Lord
Will grasp His sword of vengeance, overturn
His horn of recompense upon your foes,
And ruin them. His bow-string hath been drawn!
His arrows speed through rivers of their blood
Remorseless, as His grace embraceth thee,
And bids all nations joy. For He hath sworn,
Hath loved, and reconcileth thee, His love,
Unto thy Lord, the Blessing of the Earth.

Awake, sad morn! Sad day of parting, wake!
Weep thou, O Earth! Thy greatest son's last steps
Do tread thee heavily. Come, gather ye,
O Israël! to bid thy prince farewell.
Stand thou before the morning sacrifice!
Let none be absent! Come, O Joshua, come!

O Eleazar, come! Now let the victim die!
And wreathing incense mount before the Lord.
O ye great crowds, bend low! Hide ye your tears!
If such your power, stay your voices! Hear,
Though saddened much, his last triumphant song:

"Rejoice! Thy refuge is the' Eternal God,
Whose everlasting arms sustain, bear up,
And carry thee! These will thrust down thy foes,
And say, 'Destroy!' that thou may'st dwell alone
In thy Security, whose running streams
Shall flow through fields of corn and wine, while dew,
From heaven returning, shall refresh thy strength.
O happy Israël! who is like thee,
O people saved by God! Thy shield of help!
Thy sword of glory! Liars are thy foes!
And thou shalt tread their trusted places down."

Weep ye, twelve tribes! Weep, Levi, weep!
For ye the prince must die! Behold, ye vexed
His righteous soul, so that he uttered words
Not of the Lord! and smote where but his voice
Had Power's charge received. Now Heaven doth say,
"Go up the mount! To Nebo's peak ascend!

Thence Canaan view! and die, as Aaron died
On Hor; for ye transgressed, and gave not God
His honour before Israël." O weep!
That he, the Man of God, of Meekness born,
Loved of the Lord, who heard the cherubim
Proclaim His Name, beheld Him face to face,
Must die for Weakness, ere she too transgress,
Not knowing Justice, and her sword unsheathed.

"Farewell, my children! Fare ye well! Weep not!
For though I die, not crossing Jordan's flood,
And though your eyes shall no more see my face,
Yet stay your tears! Have I not gone three times
Into the darkness, so to meet the Lord,
Who fed, sustained me there, thrice forty days?
Had then the angel Death come nigh, what fear?
The Lord was by my side! and now this day
I go to meet Him, and His angel Death.
Weep not! but deem me absent with the Lord.
Come with me kneel. Look ye to Him henceforth!
For ye are His! O Lord, Jehovah, take
These to Thy trust, and cheer their grieving hearts!
Be Thou their comfort! Heal, bind up their wounds,
And keep in Thy sure covenant their days!

For Thou hast bid me now ascend the mount
To meet Thee there ; and I shall not come down.
Oh, comfort them ! and comfort me this day,
Thus leaving these, whom now for forty years,
Sustained by Thee, I've carried in mine arms !
Oh, gather Thou this tear which trickles o'er
My cheek, and keep it in Thy keeping safe
For them ! And now let me behold Thy face !
Behold, I come ! And these behold me go ! "

O silent peak of Nebo, Pisgah called !
What sawest thou ? Who sate in judgment then ?
Who pled in accusation ? Who in love ?
Ah ! who of the archangel spirits sped
There to contend, as Moses trode that path
Up thy steep side alone ? as at thy foot
Stood grieving Joshua, and God's high priest,
Left there of Him, while yet more far the chiefs
And elders, bearers of his burden, stayed,
As he alone went up to meet his God ?
Make answer for his charge, and mercy seek
For all God's holy look should find undone.
Who saw'st thou there ? He, to thy peak arrived,
Saw One who met him, cleared his vision's gaze,

And said, "See, Canaan lays before thy view;
Gaze o'er Mine heritage ere thou shalt die."

Faithful was Moses found in all his house
By Him, Whose sure obedience to the law,
Whose meekness in the face of man, Whose grief
For man's transgression, he had typified
For forty years, and of Whose walk of death
His own was but a shadow cast before,
Till He Himself should stagger 'neath the weight
Of Earth's transgression, and by His strong arm,
Unaided, hurl our curse and load of sin
For ever to the sea's eternal depths,
As He should yield Himself a sacrifice
For others' crimes, that they may enter rest.

Moses, to mortal sense thy name bespeaks
The sternness of the law; but unto Faith,
Eternal Tenderness, infinite Love,
Upholding Meekness, looking on His face;
And all thy life is shrouded in a cloud
Of mercy, veiling still thy follower's deeds.
Thine eye had not grown dim, nor had thy foot
Grown faint, when thou wert bid ascend

The mount! And if thou trembledst at the foot,
As conscious that the curtain of thy life
Was all but torn, and that the hour was nigh
When Friendship's ties, old sixscore years, must break,
Did not thy Rock assist and shelter thee,
Until thou on the summit stood'st erect,
Made strong by Him? And ere the moment came
Which took thee hence, was not thine heart made glad
As all the beauty of the Promised Land
Was by thee seen? And though the lot of man
Was by thee shared, was thy depart as man's?
Yea, though thou diedst, scarcely was thy death
The death of man! Thy burier was God!
Thy mourners Israël! A nation's grief
Then with the joy of angels blent, as thou
Thy mansion of mortality didst change
For life eternal, and thy sceptre left!
Henceforth a staff, which grasped by thy meek faith,
Shall lead to thine inheritance of life,
Thy nation saved, and their inheritors.

Moses, in sight of grieving Israël,
Ascended Pisgah's mount; wherefrom he saw
Before him stretched, far as his quickened eye

Could into distant vision gaze, the land
Of Canaan, lovely, fertile, blessed of God.
And there he died, supported by the Lord,
Who buried him. No eye hath seen his grave,
Nor found his last long home, if there he slept.
But God's great angel hath withdrawn from him
The shadowed hand, and closed the shielding wing,
And the Entruster's voice hath sought His charge.
For robed in light, he hath once more appeared
On earth, as with his Lord and ours he spake
Of that great death, which is our joy and his.

THE END.

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